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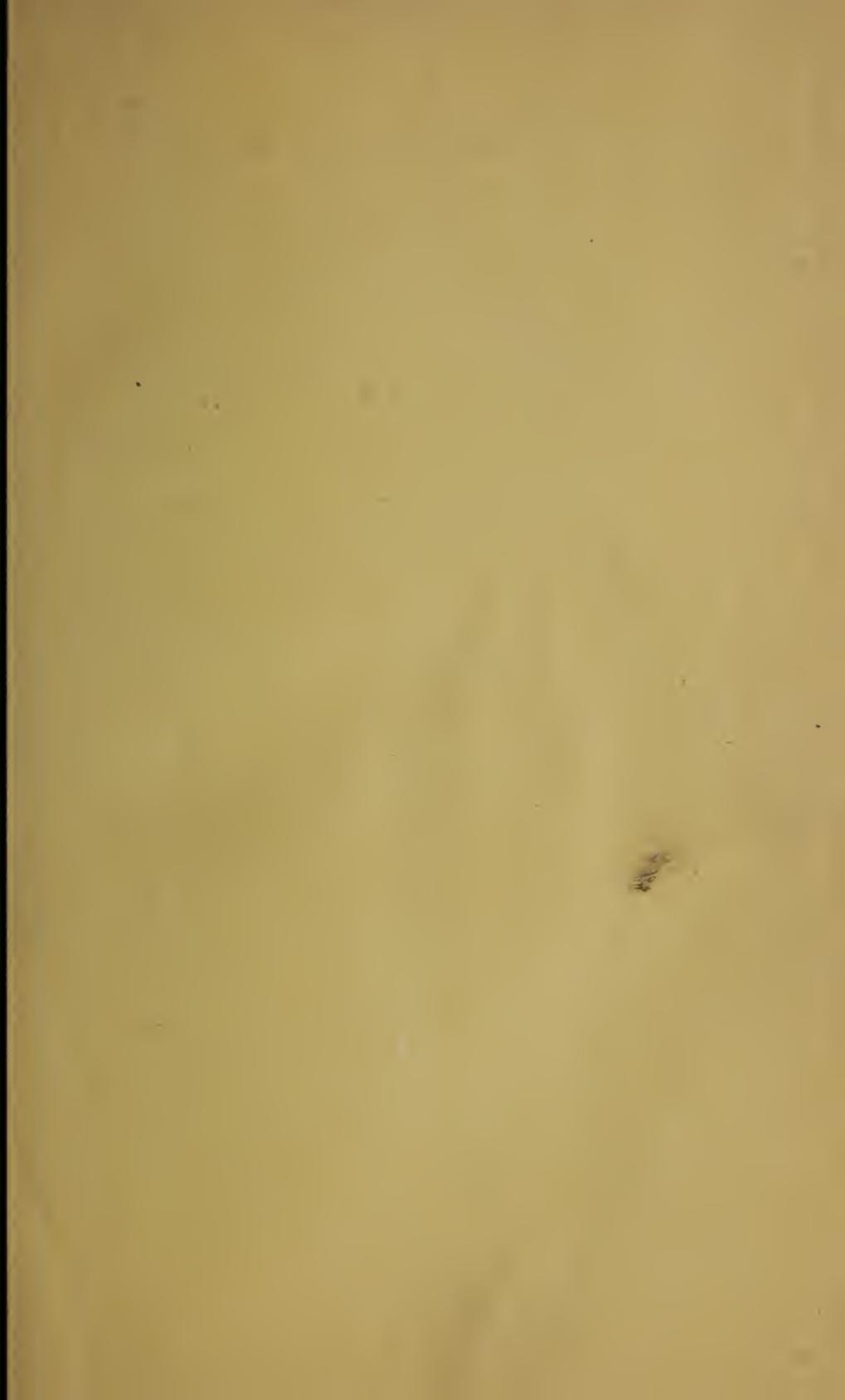
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Giotto, the shepherd boy, taking his first lesson in drawing. p. 96.

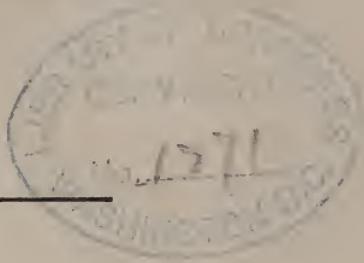
THE HOLY CHILD,

OR

THE EARLY YEARS OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

By W. M. BLACKBURN.



PHILADELPHIA :
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P R E F A C E.

I REMEMBER sitting, one bright Sabbath morning, in a Sabbath-school class. The lesson was "the wise men and the star." From the time a mother had told and repeated the story, that second chapter of Matthew appeared to me very wonderful. But my teacher made it more wonderful than ever. He described the star-light, and how the wise men came over mountains and through deserts, through noon and night, to the Great City. He drew Herod as the terrible king. He pictured the stall and the manger, until we almost thought we could see the Holy Child, and the wise men bowing down to worship. From that day I wished for a little book grouping together all the scenes of his infant life. More and more striking, has that expression, "HIS STAR" been. It was Jesus Christ's star. And

the wise men knew it was the star of a king. We hear of Herschel's star, but this was "His Star," and it went out as soon as Jesus was shown to a little band of Gentiles.

A few years since I heard a sermon on the song of the shepherds. It, too, revived the wonder of my childhood, as I imagined that brilliant glory shining upon the astonished shepherds. Standing soon after in a city park, when the trees and clouds were all made surpassingly beautiful by the burning of a worthless house, the thought came, Was it like this? There was the cloud for the angel, and here the glory of light! No it was far more brilliant. We cannot imagine the surprise of the shepherds. And had they not known of a coming Saviour, they would not have been joyful at the words of the angel. Since that time my purpose has been to try and write a little book, of which this is the result.

No one can improve the gospel record. All that can be done is to bring all the accounts into one, illustrate them, and point to the lessons for us to learn. Books at hand have been used, and perhaps some expressions stamped on the memory, have been written down without the

marks of quotation. Never would I have the Gospel record taken from a child, and this little book put in its place. No, let this lead to the Bible. Let me decrease, and the gospel writers increase. Let Jesus be crowned as Lord of all. All we can do is to help “prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.”

Importance is given in the New Testament to the record of the infancy of our Lord. If this record were not given as full as it is, cavillers might dare to say, that we have no proofs that Jesus Christ was an Hebrew, or was of the family of David, or was born in Bethlehem, as foretold, or was the child of a Virgin, or was regularly a member of the Jewish Church. But with this full record before him, no one can deny these facts and fulfilments of prophecy.

Every Christian must love these touching and beautiful records, where every delicate page is as pure as the freshest snow. Many things might have been noted in this little volume, which belong to a commentary, such as the most excellent Notes of Dr. Jacobus, which we are glad to see now bearing the stamp of the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

It is a striking fact that none of the things

which Jesus touched can be now known. Not the manger, nor the exact place where it rested, nor the house at Nazareth, nor the cross, nor the exact spot where it stood, nor the tomb, nor the rock whence he ascended, can now be identified. Why should they be? Why seek for them? Only the foolish think they need them. Jesus lives. His glorious works are not destroyed. Signs and wonders shall yet be done in the name of the Holy Child, Jesus.

W. M. B.

ERIE, PA.

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THE HOLY CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

A CHILD WHO WAS NOT HOLY.

“ ’Tis little joy—
To know I’m farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.”

I WAS once going from one town to another, on a canal boat. In passing through the lock, where the captain politely allowed us to get aboard, there was a shocking amount of cursing and swearing by all hands about the boat. After we were fairly moving onward, the

captain rebuked his men quite sharply for their profanity. He said that nearly half the town could hear them swear. He told the two driver boys that they should be dismissed, if they "carried on that way any more." But one of them, named John Conner, was very impudent, and said he was not going to have his tongue tied by any such threats. He then struck the horse, on which he was riding, a heavy blow on the head, which caused the horse to stumble and fall. John was quite badly hurt, but getting up he beat the innocent horse, and swore by the name of the Holy Child, Jesus. The men were shocked. No wonder. One of them spoke very kindly, and told John not to swear

for there was a minister on board. John looked wild. He held down his head, and walked close by the side of his horse as if he would hide himself. He was ashamed that a minister had heard him swear, as if his presence was all that made it wrong! Indeed this occurs quite often. In passing groups of men or boys, I have frequently heard one say, "Take care, there goes a minister." And yet God had been there all the time, and heard every word they had said. Why did they not care for Him, who said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?" We ought to have a proper respect for men, but first of all we should "fear God, and keep his commandments."

John was ordered to come on board at the next bridge. The men were all reading some tracts which I gave them, when John came. John had very little to say when the captain told him that, if he saw any more such conduct, he would send him home, and that would make his poor mother very sorry. When John was aside from the rest, I went to him and asked him about his home, his widowed mother, his horses, and whether he had ever been to Sabbath-school. He said he generally went fishing, or bird-hunting on Sabbath, but never went to any school on that day. He became very talkative, and told about many wonderful things he had seen and

heard. Still he did not feel quite at home.

"Did you ever hear about the Holy Child?" I asked.

"No, sir, not that I remember."

"Ever know any good children?"

"Some, better than I am."

"Why were they better?"

"You know," said he slowly, after thinking awhile; "they don't swear any, and get mad, as I do sometimes."

"Do you know the reason?"

"No, sir, but I think——" said he, hanging down his head.

"Why, John, they have heard of the Holy Child. That is it. Don't you want to hear and read about him?"

"I have no book that tells about him, I guess. Do you mean the 'boy that never told a lie?' That story was in one of my Readers."

"No, I mean the Holy Child, Jesus, who never did anything wrong. Did you never hear the name Jesus Christ?"

John was ready to cry, for he thought how wickedly he had spoken that name a little while before. He told me what books he had, and some of them were very bad books. He promised to throw them into the canal. He had never known what the New Testament is, and thought he would like to buy one. I went to a little package of Sabbath-school books, which I was carrying, and

taking from it a New Testament,
wrote in it these words :

PRESENTED TO
JOHN CONNER,
BY A TRAVELLER, WHO HOPES THAT
HE WILL READ ABOUT THE
HOLY CHILD.

John now stood by me with clean hands, a bright face, sparkling eyes, and a heart that seemed willing to be made better. "The captain will let me read," said he, "till we get to the next lock, and that is three miles yet. I was afraid that he was mad at me. Ask him not to turn me off, for my mother would almost die if he did, and all my money goes to her. Captain's got five dollars now of

mine, keeping for her. Do you think he means to turn me off?"

"He wants you to be a good boy, John, and now let me tell you how. I always have hope for a boy who loves his mother, and reads his Bible. The Holy Child loved his mother. She was a poor woman, and he was very kind and good to her as long as he lived. Let us sit down here, and look at this New Testament. About eighteen hundred years ago, Jesus Christ lived on the earth. Some good men wrote several little books about him. Matthew wrote one, and Mark another, Luke wrote a third, and John wrote a fourth. Here they are all together, with a small history of the early church, and some letters

by Paul and Peter, and John and Jude, and a book of glorious visions, which John saw, when alone on the island of Patmos. This is the only book, that tells you how to be a Christian, and get to heaven. You never read such a book. If you love to read it, you will never want to play on the Sabbath any more, nor swear, nor get angry, nor play cards, nor read bad books, nor tell lies, nor keep bad company. If you really love this Testament, you will carry it with you, and read it every day, and will wish to be like the Holy Child. You will love to sing a little song, which the children sing in Sabbath-school :

“I want to be like Jesus,
So lowly and so meek ;
For no one marked an angry word
That ever heard him speak.”

And you will also say,

“Alas ! I’m not like Jesus,
As any one may see ;
O gentle Saviour, send thy grace,
And make me like to thee.”

Now look at the first chapter of Matthew. See that long list of names. If you could go back and tell who your great-grandfather was, and who his father was, and his father, and so on back for many hundreds of years, you would then know your genealogy. These names tell us the genealogy of Jesus Christ. When you read the Old Testament, you will find most of these names, and no doubt will love to read the

wonderful histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jesse, David, and Solomon. This is the genealogy of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus Christ. His real father was God. Over here in Luke, there is the genealogy of Mary the mother of Jesus. Matthew and Luke tell you more about the Holy Child Jesus than any of the other writers. They all tell you how Jesus went about doing good, how he showed himself to be the Son of God, how he came into the world to save sinners, and how he was crucified for us, even for you and me. God had told the men who wrote the Old Testament that a great person should be born in Bethlehem, who would be the Holy Saviour. This book tells about his birth, life,

death, and resurrection. Begin here and you can read for yourself. And remember, the best way for you to speak the name of Jesus, is in prayer. Pray to Jesus to make you a good boy. Jesus can hear you pray. He is now in heaven, but as he is the Son of God, he knows all things, and can hear every word that we speak. You will soon find a prayer for you to offer every day."

John was so eager to read the new and wonderful book that he quite forgot to thank me. I was glad to see him bend down over its pages and read with all his might. I had often wondered how we should read that sweet story of the babe in Bethlehem, if we had just found it for the first time. I wish we could all

read it as John did that day. The tears came in his eyes, and he forgot that the men on the boat were looking at him. When we came to the next lock, he was called to help about the horses. And giving John a Testament for the other driver-boy, I left the boat. He thanked me as I shook his hand and helped him on his horse, and as I looked from the top of the hill I could see John reading his new book, while he sat in the saddle, and his little friend also reading on the boat. I never saw them again, but hope the lesson did some good, for the Bible says, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

Now will you read more about the Holy Child? My only design

is to help you to understand it, love it, and try to be holy children. Luther said, that if he could know that his books would keep men from reading the Bible, he would wish them all burned. Burn this little book, if it shall keep you from reading about Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS.

"He changeth the times and the seasons."—
Daniel ii. 21.

WHY do we not write the date of a letter, thus, "Year of the world 5864," instead of, "A. D. 1860?"

Why did men count time from the Creation, until about 4000 years were passed, and then begin again from a new point?

Because Jesus Christ came into the world. The dates in our histories are counted from the birth of Christ. Solomon lived 1000 years before Christ. Luther lived 1520

years after Christ. This is one thing which shows that Jesus Christ was the greatest person ever born in the world. He is the great Time-divider.

Jesus had been expected for forty centuries. Just think of a child being talked about, forty centuries before he was born ! Very few men ever had their birth foretold. Luther had not : Washington had not. God knew it from eternity, but told no man. Cyrus had been foretold and named nearly 150 years ; but Jesus was foretold through 4000 years. This shows that the prophecies came from God and are true.

The first written word about the coming of Jesus was uttered in the garden of Eden. I have little doubt

but that Adam and Eve talked with all their children about the coming Saviour. Abel was willing to listen and learn. Cain was bent on having his own way, and would not worship the Lord, as God had ordered. Abraham and Moses talked of the coming one. It is very certain that the Angel, who often talked with good men in the olden time, was Christ in the form of an angel. His name was the Angel-Lord, or Angel-Jehovah. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire, which led the way for the Israelites. He was worshipped. He was called the Lord and God. Christ lived before he was a babe in Bethlehem.

Great preparation was made for

the coming of Jesus into the world. For him a nation was raised up from Abraham. For him sacrifices were appointed. For him all the Jewish worship was established. For him the tabernacle and temple were built. For his sake the prophets were sent to preach the truth to men. Certainly he was to be a great personage.

It was not enough that he should appear as the Angel-Lord. For he must be a man in order to die for men. He was God in the flesh. Only a man sinless as he was could be a worthy sacrifice for sin ; only God could be a Saviour ; and Jesus Christ was both. He is our only sacrifice and Saviour.

Perhaps many persons think that

the Lord Jesus was not talked of very much before he came in a human body 1860 years ago. This is a mistake. The Jews talked much of his coming. David sung his praise. Isaiah seemed to have a vision of him on the Cross. So too did David; read Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii., and see how much they are like the account of the crucifixion.

“In the writings of David and Isaiah, we have a series of predictions which foretell, in the most emphatic terms, the following events:—That the Messiah was to be a descendant of David; that his mother was to be a virgin; that he was to be born in Bethlehem; that he was to be of humble birth, and without

external recommendations to public notice ; that he was to reside in Galilee ; that his life was to be one of suffering ; that he was to be rejected of his own people (the Jews) ; that he was to be betrayed by one who professed to be a friend ; that he was to be treated as a malefactor ; that he was to be mocked and insulted ; that he was to display lamb-like meekness and patience ; that he was to be put to a violent death, yet with the appearance of justice ; that his executioners were to divide his apparel, casting lots for his vesture ; that although put to death, as a criminal, he was to be interred in a rich man's tomb ; that he was to rise from the dead, without his body having undergone cor-

ruption ; and that he was to leave the world, and ascend into heaven. Now, all these prophecies are in the book which you honour as divine. There can be no forgery, for they were written long before the advent of Jesus.”*

Such things could not have been foretold, unless these men were taught of God. Jesus was to be more than the great divider of centuries : he was to come as the suffering Saviour.

Jesus whom angel hosts adore,
Became a man of griefs for me ;
In love, though rich, becoming poor,
That I through him enriched might be.

Though Lord of all, above, below,
He went to Olivet for me ;
There drank my cup of wrath and woe,
While bleeding in Gethsemane.

* See Leila Ada, p. 115.

The ever blessed Son of God,
Went up to Calvary for me ;
There paid my debt, there bore my load,
In his own body on the tree.

BONAR.

CHAPTER III.

THE DAYS OF CÆSAR AUGUSTUS.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) Luke ii. 1, 2.

WILL you take a map and find Rome? Suppose yourself living in Rome while Augustus is emperor. You hear him called “Master of the world,” and “Father of his country.” He so adorns Rome, that men are saying, “He found it of brick, and will leave it marble.” The people love him. Courtiers flatter him.

He is fond of granting favours. Once when a modest man was presenting a petition to him, in a very timid way, he exclaimed, “Be bolder, friend ; you seem as if you were offering a petition to an elephant, rather than to a man.”

Yet Augustus is proud and vain. He wishes the people to think that he is the son of a god, and that Apollo is his father. He thinks there is something divine in the brightness of his eyes, and is pleased when any one turns from his gaze, as if his keen look were painful.

In the heathen temples at Rome, are trophies from almost all nations. The land of Judea has fallen under the Roman power. A Roman army is in Judea. A troop of Roman

soldiers are in Jerusalem. Many Jews are in Rome. You hear of their keeping one day in seven as a Sabbath. The Romans do not have any day of rest, except an occasional holiday.

These Jews, in Rome, often speak of their coming Messiah. No doubt many Romans hear of this expectation. No doubt the Jews who are scattered in other lands lead men to look for some great personage to come.

Augustus seems to have loved peace ; he had many poets and historians about him. Men were reading the poems of Virgil and Horace, the histories of Livy, and the biographies of Cornelius Nepos. Strabo was writing his great geography. The Emperor often dined with

Virgil and Horace. He forgave Horace for once fighting in the army against him.

The temple of Janus was always open in the time of war. It had been shut only once or twice for hundreds of years. But now the nations have ceased fighting, for a while. Augustus orders the doors to be closed, as a sign that there is peace in the earth. God intends this in honour of Him who is coming to bring “peace on earth, good-will to men.”

Virgil caught the idea that a great Prince was coming into the world, and that the age of happiness—the golden age—was returning to men. It seems as if he had seen or heard of the Jewish Scriptures. Of a certain child, he wrote some strange

words. They will perhaps show what the Romans were expecting, as well as show how rashly Virgil could flatter, and here they are :

"The great order of the ages begins anew,
Now from high heaven a new race is sent,
In this infant the golden age
Shall rise again over the world.
He shall rule the reconciled world
With the wisdom and virtue of his father.
To thee, O child, shall the earth pour forth
Her gifts, as of old, without culture.
The timid herds in the pastures
Shall not be afraid of the terrible lions.
From thy cradle shall spring the loveliest flowers.
The serpent shall perish, and poison decay,
Clustering grapes shall hang on the thorn,
And honey shall drop from the oak.
Behold how full are all things of joy
For the age of gladness is coming "

The child which was thus complimented died soon after. Virgil knew nothing of the Holy Child.

"And it came to pass in those

days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed," or enrolled for taxing. The names and amount of property should be written down by the proper persons, so that afterward the tax-money might be collected. The custom with us is similar. One man goes among the people and *assesses* or *enrolls* the persons, and afterward another *collects* the taxes.

These taxes were not really collected for several years after the enrolment, when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria. Luke does not say that Cyrenius was governor when the enrolment was made, but when the taxes were collected. It is said that Herod had the collection of the taxes postponed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.
—Matt. ii. 1.

PLEASE take a map and find Jerusalem in the land of Judea. While Augustus was seeking peace, Herod was in perpetual quarrels. He drove the robbers from the country ; he became the terror of his friends, and put to death his foes. He was one of the worst men that ever lived, and yet was called Herod the Great.

He was great in wickedness. A complaint was once made against him because he slew whom he chose, and he was summoned before the Jewish Council. He came before that court, of about seventy men, with royal pomp. He carried a sword and wore a purple robe. He appeared very terrible, and these seventy men were afraid of him. They let him go free. He afterward put all of them to death, except one or two who had spoken well of him.

He poisoned his father, and then pretended to be very sorry over his death. He went to Rome, and by appearing noble, generous, and grand, he obtained the government over the land of Judea. This made

him king of the Jews ; he put to death forty-five nobles, and took their property. No wonder he could buy favours and hire murderers.

He married Mariamne, a beautiful woman of high rank, and made her brother, Aristobulus, the High Priest in Jerusalem. He was a lovely boy of seventeen years. The people loved him. When he appeared before the great multitude at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the splendid robes of the High Priest, and performed his solemn duties with perfect order and grace, the people were delighted. They were almost ready to cheer him, their hearts were so glad. But woe to any one whom the people loved !

Herod was jealous. He was so

crafty, however, that he pretended to join in the admiration of the young High Priest. In a few days he sent Aristobulus to Jericho, and there he was drowned by some hired traitors. But Herod, the great deceiver, put on mourning, shed tears, and made a splendid funeral, as if he was deeply grieved at his death.

Once he went to see Mark Antony and Cleopatra, for he feared they were about to take away his power. He asked his uncle Joseph to take charge of his family and his throne during his absence. He left a secret charge with Joseph, to put Mariamne to death, if his mission should fail ! Joseph told her of this. Her mother wished her to take revenge on

Herod. But she seemed ready to doubt Joseph's word, or to forgive her wicked husband. When Herod came home, he was told that Mariamne had not been faithful to him, but they were soon reconciled. He assured her that he loved her with all his heart. She then asked him why he had left that secret order for her to be put to death. Herod sprang to his feet in great fury. He was about to slay her on the spot, when he saw how beautiful she was, and his anger was cooled. No doubt her calmness and willingness to forgive kept her from being killed. Herod then turned his anger against his uncle, and Alexandra his wife's mother, because they had revealed the fatal secret.

Joseph was killed, and Alexandra was imprisoned in a wretched place.

Once after this, Herod went away and left the same order to have his wife murdered!

She found it out, and on his return met him with coldness and dislike. Who can wonder? She one day reproached him with his crimes of murder. He ordered some of her friends to be killed. He had Mariamne brought before a court, whose judges were so afraid of Herod that they dared not find her innocent. She was sentenced to death. And still when this terrible king saw how beautiful she was, he was almost ready to spare her life. She was led, one day, to execution. She passed on silently, calmly, and showed that

she felt herself to be innocent. She died worthy of the noble family of the brave Maccabees. She had ardently loved her husband and king, although he had been the murderer of her grandfather, father, brother, and uncle, and had twice left orders for her death in case he should be slain. Wonderful was the love of Mariamne ! And strange to tell, her mother took Herod's side when this loving queen was about to be slain, and reviled her as she went to the place of execution for being ungrateful to so gentle and affectionate a husband ! What traitors are often about a throne ! How wretched, oftentimes, is the home of a king ! In many a poor cottage there is far greater happi-

ness, as we shall see in the home of Joseph, and Mary, and the Holy Child.

Herod was very unhappy for a long time after this ; he could not forget that he had murdered an innocent wife. Every where, by day and by night, he was haunted by her image. He called upon her name. He went about weeping and groaning. Feasts, and revels, and dances could not drive away his remorse. He felt as if God's hand was smiting him. On the pretence of hunting, he went into the solitudes of the country, and for a time he lay at Samaria almost insane. He slowly recovered from this disease of body and mind, and seems

to have become more bloodthirsty than ever before.

It would be too revolting to tell of all the murders of which Herod was guilty. He even went so far as to have his two sons put to death. They were sons of Mariamne, and Herod had given them a good education. When they came home from their schools, the people gave them a glad welcome. How proud many a father's heart would have been at this, but Herod was jealous. He imagined that they designed to take his life and his throne. So he had them arraigned before the Emperor Augustus, and the Roman judges, and there plead against them. Through his influence they were sentenced to die. In spite of

every entreaty, he had them strangled to death. After this, remorse again seized him, and he began to pay greater attention to his nephews, which made them very suspicious of his designs.

All this will show, how ready Herod was to be filled with jealousy, fear, and hatred, when Jesus was born. It shows how crafty he was when he pretended to have a wish to go and worship the Holy Child. It helps explain why he ordered the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem.

When Herod travelled abroad, he took great pains to make people think that he was a noble and generous king, and that the Jews were a great and rich people. The Jews have

been a noble race. They hated Herod. He was only a half-Jew. His deeds made his people hate him. He brought too many Romans into their land and cities. He tried to introduce Roman customs and amusements. He built a theatre in Jerusalem. Outside of the walls he set up barbarous shows of wild beasts, and prize-fighters, which were anything but refined and amusing. They were the disgrace of even heathen Rome. When the Jews would come to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts, and to worship God in the holy temple, they would be tempted to go to these places of wickedness and cruelty. No wonder they hated such shows, and hated Herod for

bringing them to their beautiful and Holy City.

Herod then thought he would please the people. Once after a year of drought, there was not left seed-corn enough to crop the fields. Herod instantly opened his treasures, sent to Egypt for corn, and gave the people large amounts. He also gave them much ready-made clothing. It is said that he provided food, that year, for fifty-thousand people, at his own expense. His motive was to gain favour in his kingdom.

He had also a great rage for splendid buildings. He erected citadels, and built up cities. He thought he would do as Augustus was doing, and turn Jerusalem from

brick to marble. To please the people he proposed to rebuild the temple. At first they suspected he intended to destroy it. But he collected such piles of materials on the ground, that they began to think he was in earnest. Then they hastened to assist in the work. The Jews were always ready to do anything for their temple. Ten thousand workmen came. A thousand priests gave the necessary directions. There were a thousand wagons kept in service. The work went on grandly, and in a year and a half the most holy place was finished. They did not tear down the old temple all at once, but took down a part at a time, and then built up the new part in the same place. Then they

renewed another part in the same way, so that worship could be held all the time they were building. It was dedicated eight years after it was begun, and there were many sacrifices and abundant rejoicings. The entire work was not finished for forty-six years, and hence the Jews said to our Saviour, “Forty and six years was this temple in building.” John ii. 20.

Herod did all this for mere effect. He cared nothing for the temple or for its holy worship. He allowed a heathen temple to be built in a small city of Judea, and dedicated to Augustus Cæsar. He placed a large golden eagle over the great gate of the holy temple, which offended the Jews very much. Two

young men tore it down, and they, with some of their teachers, were burned alive, by order of the king. Herod went to the theatre and the shows, and presided over the cruel sports. He did not furnish any sacrifices for the regular worship in the temple, but when the Roman Agrippa came to Jerusalem, on a visit, Herod showed him all his great works, offered one hundred oxen in the temple, and feasted the whole multitude. He did this to gain favour at Rome. You will be ready now to expect just such conduct from Herod as the Bible represents.

Herod was almost seventy years old when the Holy Child was born. If you had lived in those days, you

would have found many good and devout people in the city of Jerusalem, and in Judea. You would have heard of the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They were both very old. The angel Gabriel came and told them that a son should be born in their house. This son was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was six months older than Jesus.

You would have heard of the enrolment which was ordered by Augustus at Rome. Perhaps you would have seen some Roman officers

opening an office in different towns, and in a book, registering the names of the people, and the value of their property. The Jews did not all go to Jerusalem for this. They went, each man, to the chief city of his own tribe. Those of the tribe of Judah went to Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary were of this tribe, and also of the family of king David, and when they went to Bethlehem, Jesus was born there.

God had said he should be born there. And yet Joseph and Mary lived at Nazareth. This enrolment brought them to Bethlehem at the proper time. Augustus did not know what a prophecy he was causing to be ful-

filled. Verily this is the finger of God. The emperor served God's purpose, and yet knew it not. We cannot see all the results of our actions.

CHAPTER V.

THE CITY OF DAVID.

LET us go to Bethlehem. It lies six miles from Jerusalem on the road to Hebron. It is a city set on a hill, and has been a signal-light for hundreds of years. For ages there have been reapers, gleaners, and shepherds about Bethlehem. It was called Ephratah, the fruitful, no doubt, from the rich fields and the grassy plains, near by the city. Hence also the name Bethlehem, the house of bread. I can almost imagine that David was thinking

of the valleys and fields about his native city, when he said in his song of praise to the Lord :

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it,
Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God,*
Which is full of water ;
Thou preparest them corn
When thou hast so provided for it.
Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly,
Thou settlest the furrows thereof :
Thou makest it soft with showers ;
Thou blessest the springing thereof.
Thou crownest the year with thy goodness,
And thy paths drop fatness.
They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness,
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
The pastures are clothed with flocks,
The valleys also are covered with corn ;
They shout for joy, they also sing.—Ps. lxv.

Many of the names in the genealogy of our Lord are closely connected with Bethlehem. Let us

* The rain.

notice a few of them as their history casts light on the record concerning the Holy Child.

Jacob could not forget Bethlehem. On one of his most painful journeys from Bethel, he halted near the city on the hill, and there saw Rachel die. There too he buried her, and set up a pillar upon her grave, which stood for centuries. There too Benjamin was born, the lad who was to take the place of Joseph in his heart. Jacob remembered all this on his dying bed, and said, "And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath,

the same is Bethlehem." There Rachel wept over her new born babe, and died; but in the days of Herod many mothers wept over their slain infants, and would not be comforted.

In the time of the Judges there was a famine in Bethlehem, and all the region around it. The family, in which Naomi was wife and mother, went to Moab and dwelt there ten years. Her husband and two sons died, leaving three widows. She heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread, and started to go to Bethlehem. She kissed her two daughters-in-law, and, weeping, advised them to remain among their kindred, for they were Moabites. She appreci-

ated their love to her and to her sons, and said, "The Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me." They all wept. It was hard to part, for they loved each other. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and said farewell.

Ruth would not leave her. She gave a most touching and beautiful answer to Naomi. "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

So they both went to Bethlehem. The people were surprised to see Naomi. Perhaps they thought she was dead, or were astonished to see her so sorrowful. “Is this Naomi?” And she said, “Call me not Naomi,* call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.” This was at the beginning of barley harvest.

The wheat harvest soon came on, and Ruth went into a field of one of her husband’s nearest kindred, to glean the ears that the reapers would leave. There she met Boaz, who afterward married her. Their great-grandson was David.

After reading the little book of

* Naomi means pleasant or happy: Mara means bitter.



Ruth in the harvest field.

Ruth, will you read the following from the Rev. W. M. Thomson,* a missionary and traveller? The account of the *parched corn* will certainly be pleasing:

“ I saw many flocks of sheep and goats on these same hills to-day, and was vividly reminded of those passages in the Bible history in which the flocks and the shepherds of Bethlehem figure with so much interest, as in David’s youth, and at the birth of Jesus. I was struck by, and equally delighted with, another sight on the plains of Bethlehem. The reapers were in the fields cutting barley, and after every company were women and children

* Land and the Book. Vol. ii. 509, 510.

gleaning, just as Ruth did when Boaz came to look at his labourers.

“ Yes, and in the evening you might see some poor woman or maiden, that had been permitted to glean on her own account, sitting by the road side, and beating out with a stick or a stone what she had gathered, as Ruth did. The entire scene of Boaz and Ruth might be enacted at the present day, by the dwellers in Bethlehem, with but trifling omissions and variations. The salutations that passed between the proprietor and the labourers, are no exaggeration of modern politeness. ‘The Lord be with you,’ is merely the ‘*Allah m’akum,*’ of ordinary parlance ; and so, too, the response, ‘ The Lord bless thee.’ *

"The meals, too, are quite in keeping—the *dipping* her morsel in the vinegar, and the parched corn. Harvest is the time for parched corn—not what we lads in Ohio meant by the words. It is made thus: A quantity of the best ears, not too ripe, are plucked with the stalks attached. These are tied into small parcels, a blazing fire is kindled with dry grass, and thorn bushes, and the corn-heads* are held in it until the chaff is mostly burned off. The grain is thus sufficiently roasted to be eaten, and is a favourite article all over the country. When travelling in harvest time, my muleteers have very often thus prepared parched corn in the evenings

* Their corn was a kind of wheat.

after the tent has been pitched. Nor is the gathering of these green ears for parching ever regarded as stealing. * * * This parched corn is often referred to in the Bible.

“So, also, I have seen my muleteers, as we passed along the wheat-fields, pluck off ears, rub them in their hands, and eat the grains unroasted, just as the apostles are said to have done. Matt. xii. 1, 2. This is also allowable. The Pharisees did not object to the thing itself, only to the time when it was done.”

Bethlehem was the home of many brave men. One of them killed Goliath the giant, another one killed Goliath’s brother. One of Samuel’s ancestors had lived there, and some

of David's "mighty" were from the home of his youth.

There has ever been a lack of water near the city, but what there is must be very good. The people there claim that there is something in the water of certain places near by, which makes the people healthy, sturdy, hardy, and fearless, and it is curious enough (says Mr. Thomson) "that people of this character have ever been connected with Bethlehem." But there is another cause to make them so. They have been sturdy farmers and fearless shepherds. Just this sort of men grow up on such soil. An adventure in a dark night would be a common thing. They could clamber the steep rocks and not be out of breath.

They would be too active and tough to freeze in a winter night. The hot sun would not make them faint in the harvest. They could go two or three days without eating. A swift battle-march would not weary them. To kill a bear would be nothing to boast of proudly. To take a living lion by the beard and smite him and slay him, would scarcely be worth telling to the neighbourhood. At least David did not seem to think so while a brave shepherd boy. He seems to have kept the secret until he was to face Goliath.

No doubt, young David often was weary with his rambles over the hills, learning how to sling stones, defending the sheep, and carrying

some poor lamb to the fold. And when he came to the well at the gate of Bethlehem, how sweet and cool its water would be ! He felt manly and brave after drinking it. But I scarcely think he loitered to talk with the old men at the gate. He was one of the busiest of men. Perhaps he hastened home to his harp, for, no doubt, he had sung noble songs there, long before the angels sung on the plains to the shepherds. Few wells were, to him, like that at the gate. And no wonder he once sighed, when in the cave near to his native town, with a fearful array of Philistines on the plain of Rephaim, and said, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!"

Three of his “mighty” broke through the host of the Philistines, and brought him water from that very well, but he would not drink it. Not at such a price! It had almost cost them their lives. It was like their own blood. No, he would not drink it, but poured it out as an offering to the Lord. He was thankful that such brave men were his friends, and took courage.

David, the shepherd boy, was anointed king at the same town where the Great King was born, the Shepherd of his people. Saul was not to be the true king, nor were any of his sons to succeed him. The Lord told Samuel, the prophet, that he had chosen one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite. He sent Sam-

uel to anoint him. Samuel went to Bethlehem, and the Elders trembled at his coming. What had they done that the Lord's prophet should visit them? He assured them that he came peaceably, to offer sacrifice to the Lord. All things were prepared for the solemn act. The people came. Jesse came with seven of his sons. He seems not to have thought of bringing the boy David, and left him to watch the flocks. The family of Jesse was set apart. Samuel knew not who was to be the chosen one. He first looked on Eliab the oldest and thought, "This is he." But no! "The Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have re-

fused him : for the LORD seeth not as man seeth : for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Thus seven of Jesse's sons passed before the prophet, but he said, "The Lord hath not chosen them."

"Are all thy children here?"

"There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep."

"Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither."

David was brought. He was ruddy and had fair eyes. It was a pleasure to look on his face. How artless and unsuspecting must the shepherd boy have stood before the man of God! And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Henceforth David was prophet and king. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him. The next time David went away from Bethlehem, he took some presents to Saul, and played on his harp, to soothe the troubled spirit of the angry warrior.

Bethlehem, then, was no mean city. Its highest honour was the birth of Christ, the most astonishing event that ever occurred in the universe.

“ Happy the country, but more happy the heart, in which Christ is born! One city alone had this privilege, but every soul may have it.”

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

“ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise : When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS : for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child,

and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel ; which, being interpreted, is, God with us. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife : and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son : and he called his name Jesus.”—Matt. i. 18–25.

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger ; because there was no room for them in the inn.”—Luke ii. 1–7.

Christian men, rejoice and sing,
Tis the birth-day of a King.
Night of sadness ; morn of gladness,
After many troubles sore
Morn of gladness evermore.
Midnight scarcely passed and over,
Drawing to this holy morn,
Very early, very early, Christ was born.
Sing out with bliss, His name is this,
 EMMANUEL ;
As was foretold in days of old
 By Gabriel.

Old Christmas Carol.

We know nothing of the infancy of Abraham or David, Elijah or Paul. It was not necessary to know. But it was important to know of the birth, annunciation, and consecration of our Lord Jesus. These are recorded with the most delicate care. Only a most vulgar and corrupt mind can pervert the beautiful record in the first chapters of

Luke and Matthew. It shows us how pure and honest and reverent were the minds of Joseph and Mary. It tells us the sacred love they bore to each other. How just, and tender-hearted, how frank and honourable was Joseph! How modest, how artless, how conscious of virtue was the virgin Mary! To the pure they are pure. Mary knew that the angel Gabriel could not lie. She could not be deceived as Eve was by Satan the fallen angel. Her son should have God for his father, and he should be called the Son of God. With God nothing true and holy is impossible. Her son should be her Saviour, and in her song of joy she sung his praise. He too should be the son, or descendant, of David.

As men might dispute this, and did dispute it, it was necessary to be able to prove that Joseph and Mary were of David's lineage. Thus you see why these lists of names are given. They are of great account. Thus you see God's design in the Roman census, for Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem and enrolled their names as descendants of David. And Jesus, too, must be born in Bethlehem.

But the time of year is hidden from our knowledge, lest we should make too much of it. It could hardly have been our Christmas-day, for shepherds would not be watching their flocks by night at so cold a season. It would have been a bad time for the census. Every month

of the year has been fixed as the time by different learned men. No one can tell. It is not important. All necessary truth is clear. The known fact is, Christ was born a Saviour. This is all important.

Bethlehem seems to have been crowded with people at the time of the enrolment. Never, perhaps, were there so many people there before. Many came from afar to the chief city of their father's tribe. They probably came in large companies to avoid robbers along the route. It was like many caravans coming one after another.

The Inn, or Khan, or Caravansery was crowded; this does not mean a hotel, where the traveller paid a landlord for his lodging. It was

a place for shelter, rest, and safety. Generally the oriental inn is built round an open square. It has stalls for cattle, and often over these are chambers for travellers. There is often a well of water in the enclosed space. The caravans come, and men, horses, camels, and mules, find lodging there and take care of themselves. There is no master of ceremonies, and nothing to pay. There must have been much merry and much serious talking in the inn of Bethlehem, the night that the company from Nazareth arrived, for the place was rich with history. Those not merry over the toils of their journey, could be serious over the brave deeds of their fathers. Did they talk about the coming One

with hearts burning in them? Some of them might yet see the Christ.

Joseph and Mary were on the way from Nazareth. The road was about eighty miles long. Few women in her delicate situation would have come the long route. And why did she come? Perhaps there was some little property there in her name. We think not however. Perhaps the emperor ordered both men and women to come, and she wished to be "subject unto the higher powers." Perhaps only the women of the family of David were required to be enrolled, so that the full number might be known. Even Augustus and Herod may have been interested to make such an order, as a great Prince was to rise

from it. Perhaps, as “all the people” were going from her home, she was not willing to be left there alone. All these may be true. But the great reason was, God intended her to be at Bethlehem. She was led by his unseen hand.

Did they come through Samaria along the route Jesus afterward trod? Did they rest at Jacob’s well? Did they linger at Shiloh and talk of its history? Did they drink of the springs that fed the Cherith, the brook of Elijah? Did they cast a wishful eye on the Temple in passing through Jerusalem? Ah, we know not. Perhaps they came by way of the Jordan and Jericho. There is no parade about their journey, as there would be now with

many persons. Their toils and sorrows, their happy sights and recalling of pleasant ceremonies, are not told us. They are hidden as much as possible, that Jesus may be all in all.

No one met them at the gate of Bethlehem to point them to a welcome home. The Lord could have put it into the heart of some dweller there, to prepare for their coming, and to show them "a large upper room furnished." But he did not. We might suppose it becoming, that Jesus should have been born in a palace, where the room would be spacious, splendid, carpeted, gilded, and curtained with damask, and the cradle a costly masterpiece

of art. But the Lord did not so think.

There was no room at the inn. No one was willing to give place to them. Mary did not appear sinless and sainted to them. No doubt they seemed poor and obscure, the mere relics of David's family. No one came into the streets and said, "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord." Mary was weary, and glad to go to any place of secure repose. The daughter of David finds no soft couch, no servant to unloose a sandal, no kind matron to give her "of the finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock."

Where did they find a resting place? Some say in a cave near by, used as a stall for cattle and horses,

a grotto where, centuries after, Jerome wrote some of his books. There are now such stalls in the rock, and travellers have seen cattle in them. But we do not think they went to a cave, although Jerome thought so. The good learned man may have been mistaken.

Others think they went to one of the sheds or stalls adjoining the inn. There was no room in the part of the inn intended for travellers, and they sought refuge with the tame and friendly animals. In those days this was not so strange as it would seem to us. Even now in that country a man often sleeps by his horse. A whole family sometimes lie pillow'd against the horse they love. Did you never see a lit-

tle cot or cabin with only a partition between the family and the horses and cattle? It is not very strange even in this country.

The Rev. Mr. Thomson says, "It is my impression that the birth actually took place in an ordinary house of some common peasant, and that the babe was laid in one of the mangers, such as are still found in the dwellings of the farmers of this region" (*i. e.* Bethlehem). But what of all this? God did not intend that we should know the precise place, lest we pay too great reverence to it. He who let no man know where Moses was buried, let none of us know just where Christ was born. Notice, Matthew says that the wise men found the babe in a

house. (Chap. ii. 11.) Was he removed then from a stall ?

This we do know. They were in Bethlehem several days. During this time, Jesus was born in a very humble place. Many a poor cotter's child has been wrapped in better clothes and laid upon a softer couch. No cradle rocks for him, no tender nurse lulls him to rest. Moses lay softly in his little ark, but Jesus was laid in a manger. It is nonsense to suppose that the Romanists have any pieces of that manger. They pretend to have pieces of the cross, and the nails ; yes, pounds of nails ; and even some of the darkness of Egypt, in a bottle ! Relics of this sort are foolish things.

Jesus was born poor. Though

he was rich in his glory, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich in bliss. He had no rich friends, until he lay in a rich man's grave, but he had pious parents, and they are better than wealth. It is no disgrace to be poor. Never be ashamed of poor parents. Jesus was not.

George Canning rose from humble station to be the poet, the wit, the orator, the ambassador, the statesman, and the prime minister of Great Britain. But he never forgot the mother who had been poor. When busy at a foreign court, he wrote a letter to her every week. He was ever kind to her. He could not elevate her above her former

tastes and habits. She could not ascend to him, but he could gracefully come down to her. He often left the circle of high life in London, to pay her a visit, and give delight to her humble friends, his cousins and the village cottagers. This is truly honourable.

How lowly and how meek was Jesus ! He humbled himself. "The child who is born in a cellar or garret finds this Saviour stooping to his case." He was willing to be born in the meanest place ; willing to go to the poorest and most degraded people to do them good ; willing to be pointed at as the friend of sinners, to die in all the shame and disgrace of a cross. Though Almighty, he appeared as a help-

less babe; though the most rich, he became the most poor; the Lord of glory came as a servant; the Son of God was the Son of Mary. David's Lord lay in a manger in David's city.

Every child, every man and woman ought to know this. Here is the first lesson of "God manifest in the flesh." "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Our salvation depends on the Incarnation of Christ. Only the Son of God could redeem us. He could do this only by living and dying for us. He could live and die for us only by being born as he was in Bethlehem. Here is the "Morning Star." On Calvary we may behold him as the "Sun of Righteousness."

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY. 91

The bird first breathes beneath a sheltering wing,
And nestles warm beneath a downy breast ;
The little foxes in the burrow rest ;
But in a manger lies the Heavenly King :
And so through life, until he left the dead,
He had not where to rest his Holy head.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIGHT WATCH AND THE MORNING SONG.

AND there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And

it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saving which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke ii. 8—20.

Blessed night, when first the plain,
Echoed with the joyful strain,
“ Peace has come to earth again.”
Happy shepherds, on whose ear
Fell the tidings glad and dear,
“ God to man is drawing near.”

BONAR.

WE love shepherds. We fancy
they live easy, quiet, and happy.

lives. They love the lambs, and the lambs love them. They learn every face in the flock, and give names to them. They often fancy a certain sheep looks like some person, and they give it his name. The sheep learn their names, and come at the shepherd's call. At a strange voice they flee away. John x. 1—5.

Abel was a keeper of sheep. So were nearly all the great men of the Bible down to the time of Moses and Job. The title of shepherd was one of honour. It was often given to good and tender-hearted kings. David used it in a higher sense. "The Lord is my Shepherd." Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd."

Many shepherds have become celebrated men. Job was the greatest man of the east, in his day. Moses left his flocks in Midian to be a leader of the Hebrews, a law-giver, and inspired writer. David became the greatest of the Hebrew kings. Amos became a prophet.

James Ferguson of Scotland was a shepherd boy. During the day, when his flock was feeding around him, he was busy making models of mills, a globe, a clock, and a watch. At night he would go to the fields with a blanket about him, and a lighted candle by which to see his notes, and for hours he would lie on the grass and study the stars. He became a quite successful artist, a

popular author, and wise philosopher.

Good shepherds were brave. They cared for the sheep. They were ready to lay down life in defending the flock. They often had downright and desperate fights with wild beasts and robbers. A few years ago a shepherd, near Mount Tabor, was hacked to pieces by robbers, and died among the sheep he was defending.* The Great Shepherd laid down his life, and still defends his people.

May we cite another?

“Let us wander through the fields
Where Cimabue found a shepherd boy
Tracing his idle fancies on the ground.”

This shepherd boy was Giotto,

* Land and the Book. I. 302.

who became the greatest painter of his time. His picture of Mary presenting the infant Jesus in the Temple was much admired. No one can paint the Holy Child as he really appeared. We must get our idea of him from something else than pictures.

Near Bethlehem there were "shepherds abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night." They were devout and pious men. They worshipped the God above the stars. No doubt they were waiting for the coming of Christ. They were to have the first honour of hearing the glad news of that night, seeing the babe in the morning, and being the first preachers of the joyful tidings during the day.

There were four night-watches. Our Lord mentions them : “ Watch, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh ; at *even*, or at *midnight*, or at the *cock-crowing*, or in the *morning*.” (Mark xiii. 35.) The first ended at nine o’clock, and each was three hours long. In summer, the first and last watch were about half in the light.

The Jewish writers say that it was common to keep the flocks at pasture from March till November. During this season they were not folded at night. The shepherds often had little tents or cottages in the fields, and sometimes their families dwelt there in them. There the watchers lodged, each one taking

his turn, as is common among soldiers and seamen.

Jesus was seen of angels. That very night, while the shepherds were watching their flocks, the angels were looking on the babe of Bethlehem. The heathen poets and moralists never had the idea of an angel. So pure, holy, lovely, swift, and invisible a being could be known to us only by Revelation. Angels came from heaven. The book that tells of them came from God. All their names, told to us, end in El, a name of God. You read of Michael and Gabriel. Angels have been seen, but only in a miracle. Jacob saw angels. Zacharias saw one. Mary saw Gabriel himself. Joseph heard an angel's voice.

Infants have some association with angels unknown to us. Our Lord said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Jesus is seen of angels, and they hasten to tell the sight.

The shepherds were not watching for angels. It was yet night. No travellers were then expected to cross the plain. The flocks lay sleeping on the dewy grass. No bleating voice was heard. The wind was still. The watchers sat silent with perhaps a solemn thought of wonder as they gazed on those stars, on which Abraham looked and read the promises. What promises yet to come! When lo! a startling vision! the angel of the Lord stood

above them. They saw him. Was he Gabriel? An angel of light indeed.

And the glory of the Lord shone round about them. It must have been a bright light. Not a brilliance afar off, like the northern lights, but upon the ground where they stood. Perhaps it was like the light Saul of Tarsus saw, brighter than the sun could make at noon. It came suddenly, and Saul could not see for the glory of that light. Such a dazzling brightness, near at hand, was the sign of Jehovah's presence. It had in olden times filled the tabernacle. God dwelleth in light.

The shepherds were struck with sudden fear. We can fancy the

flocks rising, startled to their feet, surprised at the unusual morn. The men felt as Moses did when he suddenly saw the burning bush. They were ready to shrink away. How the evil of all their lives would flash upon their minds in such a moment! But such a light was a token of God's mercy. It was such to Moses, and to Saul of Tarsus.

"Fear not," said the angel, just as was said to Zacharias and to Mary. "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

Glad tidings to us, and to all who

hear the good news of salvation. This voice shall roll through all the world, and echo through all the universe. “Unto *you*,” said the angel. Unto us, the gospel also declares, Christ is born to us. Mary’s son is the sinner’s Saviour. The light of the world had come.

To us a child of hope is born,
To us a son is given ;
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The mighty Lord of heaven.

Thus an angel preached the gospel. An angel called the babe of Bethlehem a Saviour. An angel, who could not be mistaken, called him Divine, THE LORD. An angel, who knew him before he left the glory which he had with the Father, had, to Mary, called him the Son of

God. An angel, who had worshipped him, said that he was the Messiah, whom the nation had long expected. Truly the angel was a preacher of theology.

The fear of the shepherds turns to wonder. They cannot say a word, nor ask, "What sign shovest thou?" But they shall have a sign. If willing to do their duty, they shall see and believe. The sign is the sight itself. They may know the babe by his humble dress, and by the manger. Thus we point to the Saviour. You may know him by his humility, his sorrows, his cross. He is the Great Sufferer.

Another sign appears, to show that these men cannot be mistaken. There is joy in heaven. One an-

gel told the glad tidings, and now a heavenly host come to sing their joy. It seems as if the heavens were opened, and all the angels coming down to celebrate the Saviour's birth. It was a more glorious hour than when, at Creation, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Imagine it, if you can. The like was never known before, nor will be, until Christ shall come again in his glory and all the holy angels with him.

On wings of light, on wings of flame,
The glorious hosts of Zion came,
High heaven with songs of triumph rung,
While thus they struck their harps and sung,

"Glory to God in the highest, and
on earth peace, good will to men."

The men have forgotten their fears. Such music has brought great joy. The one long looked-for is now come. The angels have finished their errand. They cannot linger. No angel was ever known to remain on earth longer than his message required. Even they have no time to call their own. Indolence is a sin.

When the angels are gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds speak one to another. They provoke one another to good works. They must do what the angel said, and go at once. They did not say, "Let us go and see whether this be so." No, not a doubt was in their minds. They knew the babe was in the city. The Lord had said so

by the angel. “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.” Not at noon, but now. They are not ashamed to go and see Jesus. They are not fearful of their worldly affairs. The Lord will take care of their flocks. No lion shall be there, nor ravenous beast. If all, who hear of Christ the Saviour Lord, would be as ready to “come and see” as these shepherds, there would not be an unbeliever in all Christendom.

They came with haste. They ran perhaps, as Peter and John did in going to the sepulchre. They found the place. They saw Joseph and Mary. They saw the babe. There

were the signs, the clothes, and the manger, not a halo of brightness about his head. This halo was invented by the Italian painters. It was never seen about the brows of Mary nor of Jesus. No doubt they told Joseph and Mary of the voices and visions on the plains.

They too had no time to lose. They returned, not boasting and praising themselves, but giving God the glory. The news was too good to be kept secret. They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. They became preachers and heralds of the gospel among their neighbours. They told not only what they had seen, but the sayings they had heard. They were ready to say, as Andrew

and Philip afterward, “Come and see.”

Many wondered at the news. Many did that and no more ; many were too proud to go and see the Holy Child. They chose to be ignorant and faithless. We are apt to think that, if we had lived in the days of Christ, we should have believed and loved him. Probably we should only have wondered. Most of men did so then. Many now “wonder and perish.” We are not told of another person about Bethlehem, who went to see the young child : not a priest, nor scribe, nor Pharisee.

But while many wondered, Mary pondered ; she weighed the words. She put this and that together, to

know what they all meant. She left the honour of her reproachless name to God, and thought of her son and Saviour. She kept every saying about him; she was not forgetful of what an angel had told her, and was willing to learn from these humble shepherds. She was glad that if no one else took notice of the Holy Child, angels and shepherds did. Her heart was full of joy. Every mother notices what is said of her child, and treasures up all that is pleasant in her heart. So did Mary. How, then, could she fail to learn that he was the Son of God?

A remembrance of these names and offices of “the Saviour Christ the Lord,” will be to us as a guiding

star in the sky to the mariner tossed on the sea. In a night of sin or of grief, they will be “glad tidings of great joy.” After our night watch, they will be our morning song.

The shepherds saw him who is the Good Shepherd of the soul. Jesus had no name more touching and beautiful. He seeks us when lost. He calls us. He names us. He carries us. He folds us. He loves us. He lays down his life and takes it again for us. Happy the soul that can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

I was a wandering sheep,
I would not be controlled ;
But now I love my Shepherd's voice,
I love, I love the fold.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NAME AND THE DOVES.

AND when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord ; As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord ; and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. Luke ii. 21—24.

“ JESUS, the name that calms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease.”

THE Holy Child was now eight days old. He was consecrated to

the Lord in the solemn rites of the Jewish Church. Hannah thus dedicated Samuel to the Lord. Many children are now dedicated to the Lord in baptism. It is certainly as proper and important to devote children to the Lord now, as it was in the days of Abraham, David, and our Lord Jesus. God commanded it then. We think he commands it now. But if we have been baptized, let us consecrate ourselves also to God.

A name was given to the Holy Child. Mary and Joseph knew what the name was to be. The angel had said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." Six persons, mentioned in the Bible, were named before they were born. Isaac, Ish-

mael, Josiah, Cyrus, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ. There is no name like that of Jesus. It is a Greek word. The Hebrew name Joshua is the same. It was a common name, in both these forms, when Jesus was born. But only one person was called Jesus Christ. Jesus means Saviour. Christ means the Anointed. The Holy Child was the Anointed Saviour. God gave him the name. “He hath given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” This does not mean, that we should bow our heads when that name is pronounced in church. It means that some time all the world will confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; either

confess it to him as their Judge, or their King. Our only Saviour is our King Jesus.

The more we love Jesus, the sweeter that name will sound. When the late Dr. Hope of Princeton college was dying, he began to repeat the lines,

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;”

when his power of utterance seemed to fail. His sorrow-stricken wife, who was by his bedside, finished the stanza thus :

“Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My *Saviour* and my all.”

“Say *Jesus*,” said her dying husband; and then breathed his last. In our hymn book, it reads as he

corrected it. The dying man was, no doubt, thinking how sweet that name Jesus sounded in his ears. Perhaps that rich verse was in his mind: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

This name was written on the cross. It was the name by which the apostles called the Lord Christ. Our Saviour, after his ascension to heaven, once spoke his name to a wicked man. Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Church. He was one day struck to the ground by a miracle. He was astonished. He asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" What an answer! "I am Jesus!" Yes, Jesus called himself by the sweetest, tenderest name he had.

He would win Saul to love him. It was the name of love and friendship. This Saul became Paul the Apostle, and ever afterward loved this tender, holy name.

This is the name by which he invites us to follow him, believe him, love him, and be like him. Every reader is old enough to say,

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God ;
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursed load.

I lay my griefs on Jesus,
My burdens and my cares ;
He from them all releases,
He all my sorrows shares.

I long to be like Jesus,
Meek, loving, lowly, mild ;
I long to be like Jesus,
The Father's Holy Child.

I long to be with Jesus,
Amid the heavenly throng,
To sing with saints his praises,
And learn the angels' song.

A month passed away, and the Holy Child was forty days old. It was then necessary for Mary to go to Jerusalem, and there offer a sacrifice for herself, and also present her holy son publicly to the Lord in the temple.

Jerusalem was six miles from Bethlehem. How Joseph and Mary went, and when they arrived, we are not told. No doubt they started early in the day. As they came to the temple they probably saw men at work, repairing or rebuilding some parts of it. Perhaps they came in time to attend the morning

sacrifice. Suppose we visit the temple at this early hour.

We enter the holy and beautiful house, while yet there are shadows of night about it. We enter the court of the priests. We see the fire still burning on the great altar. There are a few watchmen in the court. Soon some priests come in from their rooms. They wash and put on white robes of linen. Then comes one who is called the President. He tells the priests what to do. One renews the fire on the altar. Others go about with lighted torches to see whether every thing is in right order, and when they meet we hear them say,

“ Is all safe and well?”

“ Yes, all is well.”

One is appointed to kill the morning victim, another to sprinkle the blood, another to carry the sacrifice to the altar. Then the President thus orders : " Go and see whether it be time to kill the sacrifice." Some one goes to the top of one of the buildings about the court, and when he sees that the sun is about rising, replies, " It is fair day." " But is the heaven bright all up to Hebron ? " " Yes." " Go then," (says the President,) " and bring the lamb, from the lamb-room."

In a room near at hand are kept the lambs for the altar. There are generally as many as six kept in it. One is now brought into the court ; while it is trembling and shivering in fear, men examine it with candles

to see if there is any blemish upon it. There must be a perfect lamb as a type of a perfect Saviour.

The gates of the court are now opened, and the front doors of the temple are unfolded. The Levites enter, and the people come into the house of the Lord to worship. The lamb is slain. The incense is kindled into a flame. Soon the lamb is burning on the altar. Clouds of fragrant incense rise, and the people unite in silent prayer. They feel that the "sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." From such hearts as those of Simeon and Anna ascends the incense of prayer, far more pleasing to God than the sweetest fragrance from the altar.

It is nine or ten o'clock before this service is finished.

Mary, the young mother, was not allowed to come into the temple until she brought an offering to the Lord. It seems she was not able to furnish a lamb, and, as a poor person, she provided two doves. They were either such as are called turtle doves,* or another kind called pigeons. They were, no doubt, bought at the place where men kept and sold them for this purpose. Mary was not ashamed of her poverty. She did not try to appear rich, nor did she wish to appear

* This dove is so called, because it makes a low moaning sound as if in distress. The word *turtle*, is from “*tur tur*” (toor-toor), in imitation of its low murmur.

poor, unless she was poor. Such pride is foolish and wrong.

The dove coming to the ark with the olive leaf, was not more affecting to Noah than these innocent and beautiful birds were to Mary. One was to be her burnt-offering, and was to be offered on the altar. The other was for a sin-offering, and some of its blood was to be sprinkled in the holy place. Poor birds ! only types of the Saviour whom Mary had borne in her arms.

When Mary came to the door of the sanctuary, she gave these birds to the priest, and they were slain. She then might enter the temple. The Holy Child was then taken in with Joseph and Mary, so that he

might be presented to the Lord, as her first-born son. Why was this?

When the first-born of the Egyptians were slain, on that awful night, when the angel of death passed over the houses of the Hebrews, but passed into the houses of their enemies, the first-born of the Hebrews were spared. All these children were to be the Lord's. They were his for the priesthood. But the tribe of Levi was set apart to that office, in place of as many of the first-born as the tribe would number. Yet the number of the first-born was the greatest. Hence the custom arose, of making an offering for these children so that they might live with their parents, and not be set apart among the sons

of Levi. It was redeeming them from the service of the temple. Mary did this also, when she offered the doves. Perhaps also she and Joseph paid, to the temple, the sum of five shekels of silver.* Jesus is sometimes called "the first-born among many brethren."

*About three dollars.

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CHAPTER IX.

SIMEON'S HAPPY DAY.

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel ; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple : and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother mar-

velled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser ; she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity ; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Luke ii. 25—38.

Yes, soon and for ever we'll see as we're seen,
And learn the deep meaning of things that have
been.

MONSELL.

THERE dwelt in Jerusalem at this time a good man named Simeon. He was just in all his dealings with

men, and was devotedly pious in the sight of God. He was probably very old. For years he had hoped to see the Messiah come. He waited for him, for Jesus would be the “consolation of Israel.” All true Israelites would be glad to see him. Simeon was a happy man. He loved God, and God loved him. The Holy Ghost was upon him. In some sure way it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not die until he had seen Jesus Christ. Prophets and kings had long desired to see their Saviour, but died without the sight. Simeon should see him.

While Mary was presenting Jesus to the Lord, Simeon came into the temple. The Spirit put it into

his heart to go. He seems to have known who the Holy Child was. How glad was his heart! He was in haste to see this Saviour. He took the Holy Child in his arms and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Yes, his eyes saw the Saviour whom God sent. They sparkled with delight. It was the gladdest sight of his life. He was now ready to die. He had seen enough. He had seen that God's promise was true.

Nor was this Saviour for him alone. He was for all who would believe and love him. He was a light to lighten the Gentiles. He would one day stand near that very tem-

ple and say, “I am the light of the world.” He was the glory of the people of Israel. No one of all that nation was so glorious. No one would ever do such wondrous things.

Joseph and Mary marvelled at what they saw and heard. To see an old man so joyous over a babe, and hear him call him his “Salvation,” and appear so ready to die, seemed very wonderful. They thought and wondered, both at the old man and the young child.

Simeon blessed them. He did not worship Mary, nor pray to her, nor render thanks to her. Jesus alone was worthy to be worshipped. No one in those days thought of offering praise and prayer to Mary.

Simeon then uttered some wondrous words :

“Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed : yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.”

I have changed the order of these words a little, so that they may be better understood. Now let us see what they mean. Jesus is set or confirmed as a Saviour. It is a fact that Jesus is come into the world to save sinners. If half the world should deny it, yet this is true. If blind men should all say that there was no sun, yet that would not strike the sun from the sky. If

half the world should deny that Jesus is the Son of God, still that does not make him not divine. He is still and ever the Son of God.

Many shall fall, says Simeon. Many of the Jews refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ, their Messiah ; many of them thought that he was too poor, meek, and lowly to be the Saviour. They thought it a great disgrace that he should be called the carpenter's son. They thought that such a meek and poor man ought not to work miracles, and be set up as a great teacher, and claim to be the Son of God. They were offended because Jesus did not suit their own wrong notions and opinions. They fell into greater unbelief and hatred. They fell into sins and persecutions

against Jesus. They fell into the sin of crucifying their Messiah. They became very wicked and were lost. They were not willing to say, We will believe what God says, just because he says so. And so many persons have done since. It is their own fault. They might believe, but they will not. This is falling by an abuse of our blessings.

Many should rise. Many loved the Saviour because he was so lowly, so meek, so tender hearted. They loved him because he went about doing good, and could forgive sins, and save sinners. They loved him because he died for them. They rose from their sins. They became better men. They followed Jesus. They knew that he was the Son of

God, and their precious Saviour
They were saved. All such persons
will rise to heaven.

Jesus was a sign that should be spoken against. Many persons spoke against him. They called him by evil names. They said he was a deceiver, and even said he was a blasphemer! They would not take a little pains to find out the truth. How they spoke against him in the judgment-hall and on Calvary! How they abused the disciples! Even now some persons speak against Jesus!

I was once riding in a stage-coach. The driver had but one arm. He was not a good man, though he knew what was right. I overheard what he was saying to a friend of his.

He said that the night before some men were speaking against Jesus Christ. They made sport of the Bible. They took the name of Jesus in vain. They drank rum and ridiculed the church and all good people. Then said he, "I am not a good man, but I know the Bible is God's book; and let me tell you, I won't trust any man who speaks against Jesus Christ. No man who knows anything about him would say that Jesus was only a man like other men, and not the Son of God. I would rather lose the only arm I've got, than to talk as they did." He was right. I hope what was said to him that day did some good.

Simeon said, that men would thus speak against Jesus, that their

thoughts and hearts might be revealed. They would show just what sort of men they were. Men that oppose Jesus show that they have very bad hearts. We oppose him when we refuse to do what he has told us must be done, or we cannot be saved. Sometimes the more persons, young and old, hear of Jesus Christ, the more they show forth their wicked hearts.

While Simeon's lips were trembling with such strange words, he looked with a pitying eye on Mary. He seemed to see what evil would be done to her divine son, how men would oppose him and put him to death. Mary would see this and be very sorrowful. She would see Jesus on the cross. How would a

mother feel to see her son crucified ? Yes, that Holy Child should be a great sufferer, in order to be a great Saviour. Then he said to Mary, " Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also." He meant the sword of sorrow. No doubt Mary often wept to see what sufferings Jesus endured.

Thousands of mothers have sorrows over their children. They weep over the cradle, and the couch of pain. They too often see their children become very wicked, learning to swear, and break the Sabbath. They try to plead with them, but are only grieved to see them more wicked. Children sometimes even laugh at a mother's tears and pleadings. There is a sense in which

every good mother is set for the rise and fall of her children, and for a sign to be spoken against. They thus show what hearts they have. Samuel's mother did not have to weep over such conduct. He did not copy the evil example of Eli's sons. When his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him, from year to year, she found no sword of sorrow piercing her heart. The child who obeys a good mother will gladden her heart, and will be quite sure to become a useful and pious man, or woman.

“ This will a mother’s heart repay,
If that loved band,
By grace sustained, shall often say,
‘ Next to God’s hand,
All of true happiness we know,
Mother, to thy strong love we owe.’ ”

Remember, however, that Mary would not weep over anything wrong in Jesus. He would never offend her. She never saw him do a wrong act, or heard him speak a sinful word. He never had a wrong thought. He did no sin. In his heart was no sin. She would have this comfort always, "My son is right. He is never at fault. He suffers because he is holy and divine."

No doubt she also felt sorrowful because she was a sinner, and her son must suffer for her sins. She needed, like us, to say, "I lay my sins on Jesus." There was no saving merit in being the mother of her Saviour.

While Simeon was praising God, there came a very old woman into

the temple. She was Anna a prophetess. She was eighty-four years old, and had long been a widow. She belonged to the tribe of Asher. She loved the temple so much that it was like home to her. Every day she was there, and perhaps often at night. She served God so devoutly that she fasted often, and “prayed without ceasing.” Her breath was full of prayer. She seemed to say, as David did, “I will abide in thy house.” “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” Some people only visit the house of God; others are at home there, and can say, “It is good to be here.”

Anna came in and saw the young child. Perhaps she came just when Jesus was in Simeon's arms. She thanked God for the sight. So glad was her heart, that she could not keep the good news to herself. She told her friends that the Messiah was born. They too were looking for the Redeemer. Perhaps they knew that Simeon should not die before he had seen the Saviour. They hoped to live as long as he did and see him too. Many such devout and godly people dwelt then in Jerusalem. Probably many of them came and saw the Holy Child.

After this glad day of wonders, Joseph and Mary took the young child and returned to Bethlehem.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAGES AND THE STAR.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests, and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod,

when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem : and said, Go and search diligently for the young child ; and when ye have found him, bring me - word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed : and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. Matt. ii. 1—12.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid ;
Star of the East the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

HEBER.

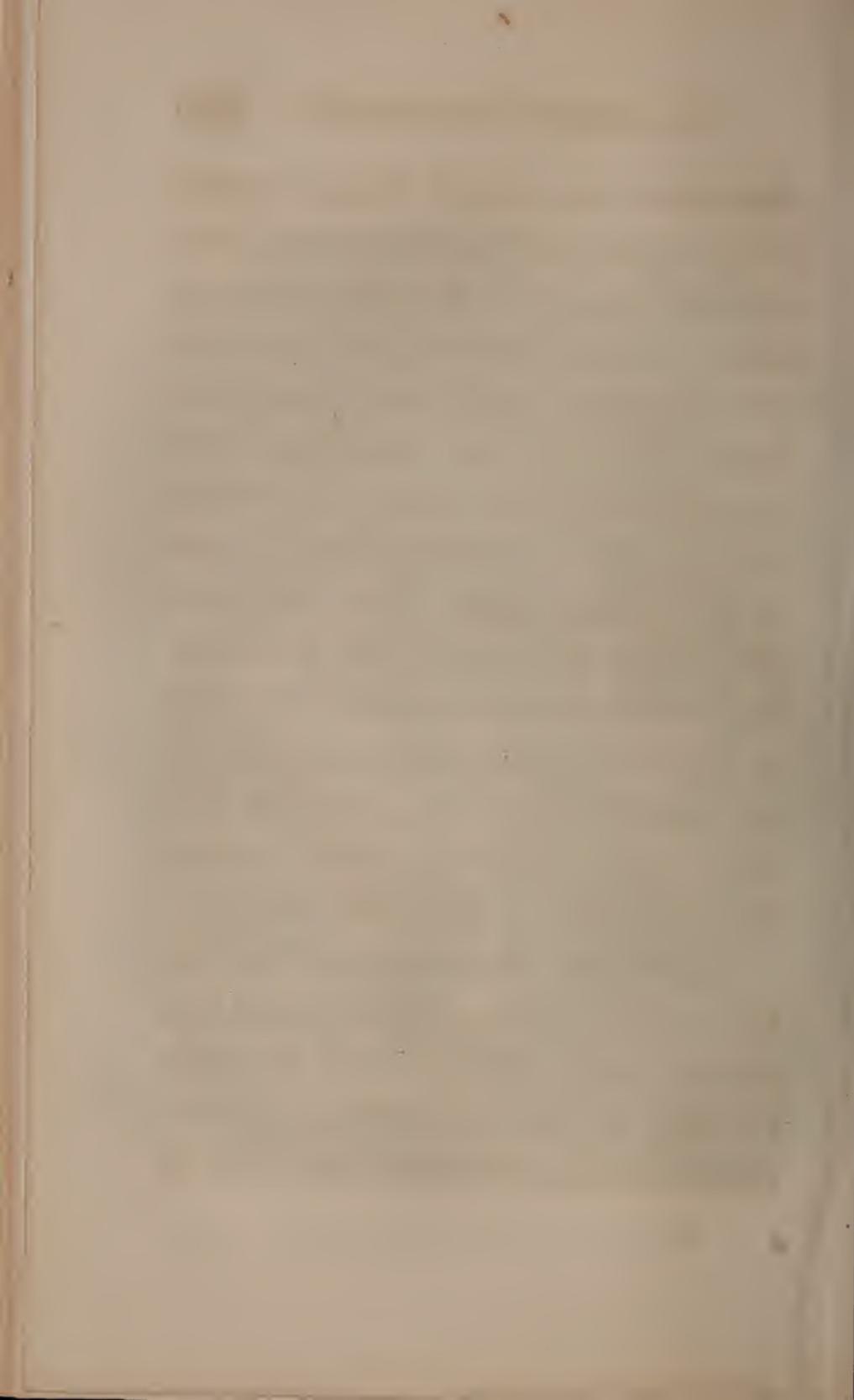
The Holy Child received a wonderful visit. Wise men came from the East to see a babe in Bethlehem, and one lying in such a poor cradle. But yet there was no parade made about it. It was not published abroad by every one who wrote of the child Jesus. Only one of them tells anything about it, and he as plainly as possible. Matthew tells of the visit of the wise men, and Luke tells of the visit of the shepherds. But neither of them knew of any such visit from the great and wise men of Jerusalem. Christ came unto his own, and his own received him not.

These wise men were called Magi. There were such men in the times of Daniel. The king of Babylon



Visit of the wise men to the infant Saviour.

p. 144.



thought these Magi knew almost every thing, but he found that Daniel and his three friends were far wiser. In all matters of wisdom and learning, they were ten times better than all the magicians and star-gazers in the realm. God had taught them. These Magi were once learned men. They did not play tricks and try to tell fortunes. But afterward the name was given to sorcerers and magicians, sooth-sayers and fortune-tellers. In this bad sense one Simon is called Simon Magus. Acts viii. 9—25.

The Magi who came to see the Holy Child were certainly wise and honest men. It was wise in them to come so far to see him, and all their conduct was fair and honest.

Who they were we are not told : some have thought they were kings, or men who came from royal courts. Whence they came we know not ; perhaps from Persia, or Arabia. How many there were we know not ; some think three, because they gave three sorts of gifts. It matters little who they were. It is well to notice “that there may be true servants of God in places where we do not expect to find them.”

How did they hear of the Holy Child ? The star did not tell them. How did they know that the star was “his star?” They had heard of the expectation of the Jews. They knew that a “King of the Jews” was to be born. They knew something about the prophecy referring to

Jesus Christ. Perhaps they learned something about it, from the descendants of the ten tribes who were wandering among the nations : or from traditions which men had told to one another for ages. Perhaps they had heard of Balaam's strange prophecy, which he learned in a vision : "There shall come a Star out of Jacob,"* and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that

*The star referred to Christ. About 130 years after Christ, a man arose who called himself Bar-cochab, or the Son of a Star. He claimed to be the Messiah. But he was a very wicked man. After he had deceived many people, they called him Bar-cosba, the Son of a Lie ! Our Saviour had said that false Christs should come. This man was one of the first of that class.

remaineth of the city." All these may have been true.

It seems to me that God revealed to them the fact that a King and Saviour was to be born among the Jews, and put it into their hearts to go to worship him. They seem to have thought that he was to be more than a human child; a Holy Child indeed. They took presents and started on the journey. The star was the sign when to start, and they marched toward Jerusalem.

The shepherds were guided by an angel, for they were familiar with accounts of angels; the Magi are guided by a star, for they are familiar with the study of the stars. They knew this new star was no common one, and was a signal of

no common event. Shepherds and sages both could say, "The heavens declare the glory of God."

The wise men came to Jerusalem. As that was the royal city of the Jews, they seem to have thought that the Holy Child would be found there. We can almost imagine them inquiring of the people where he was. Was he not in some palace, or with some wealthy family? They ask, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east,* and are come to worship him.

Herod heard that these wise men were in the city. He was then

* "While we were in the East, we saw his star." The star did not appear shining east of them, but *west*.

about seventy years old, and his heart was as wicked as ever before. He was troubled, for he was jealous, and fearful that some true Israelite would rise up and become a king. That title, "King of the Jews," was whispered in his halls and ran through the palace like an electric shock. Were the people rising up against him to claim their rights? Quite lately six thousand in the city have refused to take the oath of allegiance to him, and are they about to set up a new king? Herod was afraid, for "the wicked fear where no fear is." In one sense there was no cause of fear to him, "for this King that was born, was candidate for quite another crown than any which Herod would have cared to

wear." He would receive the crown of thorns from men, and the crown of glory from God.

While Herod was asking, "Who is he—where is he?" the city was full of rumours. "All Jerusalem" was troubled with him. The people were, no doubt, afraid of war. Herod's friends trembled lest the tyrant should be hurled down in his old age.

Herod called a council of the Jews. He knew that a person called Christ, was expected by the Jewish nation. He wished to know where he would be born. The learned men would know. In his great trouble he demanded of them to tell him this secret, so awful and frightful to him.

They answer correctly: "In Bethlehem." They know what the prophecy means. Their heads are better than their hearts. They quote their proof from Micah the prophet: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

Herod wanted to hear no more from the Bible. The words about a Governor, who should come and rule, were a terror to him. He did not know that Christ would say, "My kingdom is not of this world," and would refuse to be made king. He is very jealous and proud, and seems to say to himself,

“Am I not Herod? who shall dare
My crown to take, my sceptre bear,
As King among the Jews?”

The old king is crafty as a fox. He now calls the wise men, to come as privately as possible. Nobody must know of it, so as to tell it through the city. He is very diligent in asking questions. He wants to find out how old this new “King of the Jews” is. He asks when they first saw the star, and probably many other questions about it. He may have thought it was a miracle which God had set in the sky. This would make him very cautious. He concludes that this king is a young child, and thinks that the best policy is to pretend to have great love and reverence for him. He

will send these wise men to search for the child, for perhaps they will not find him. He does not send any of the Jews.

“Go and search diligently,” he says, as if it would require hard searching to find any king in Bethlehem. Can any good thing come out of little Bethlehem? It would seem as if he meant to say, “I am king here, go see if you can find any other.” And yet he would play a very pious part. If they should find such a child, he will pretend to pay him all due honour. “When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” He would hardly dare go now himself!

These wise men had lost sight of

“*His star*,” not their star. Probably they thought it would not shine again, as they had now learned the place where this “King of the Jews” would be found. But as they left the city along the old Hebron-road, lo! there it was again. And strange too, it did not (as it seems to me) appear in the same direction as before. Then it was toward the west, or north-west. But now it is in the south! And it moves too! It goes before them, and stands just over the place where the young child is! They wonder, and are glad, with exceeding great joy.

This star then was not such an one as we see. It must have been some brilliant star-light, which God held out in the sky to shine for

several days, change its course, and move on and stop over Bethlehem. If God made a pillar of cloud by day, and a bright pillar of fire by night, to move on where the people of Israel should follow, and to rest where they should encamp, surely it is proper for us to believe that he made a star-light to move and lead the wise men to where the young child was. I cannot think it was a new planet just set in the firmament, nor a "conjunction of planets," but a special star-light and a miracle.

The Bible is our star. It will lead us to Jesus. Let us not do as Herod did, learn about this star and then refuse to follow it. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a

light unto my path." As the wise men rejoiced when they saw the star, let us rejoice over any thing that will lead us to Jesus ; a verse, a word, a friend, a prayer, a sermon, a thought !

These wise travellers came to the very house where the Holy Child was. They went in, and looked first of all for this king. They saw him with Mary his mother. They fell down, at once, on their faces and worshipped him. They never thought of worshipping Mary. No doubt they paid her all due respect. But they paid worship to Jesus. What was this worship ?

The word *worship* was once written *worthship*. To honour a man was to recognize his worthship.

Hence it is sometimes said men worshipped kings and friends ; they respected their worth, and their office. The Magi may have honoured Mary in this way.

But this word means far more when men worship God. They recognize his worth, as Creator and God over all. The Magi thus recognized the worth of Jesus. The more they knew, the higher the worship they paid to him. They certainly thought he was more than a mortal human child.

Why would they come from their distant homes to see him if he was to be a common earthly king ? Why come to the very throne of Herod to pay respects to one who might be his rival ? Surely they

thought, and told Herod, that this child was king of another and holier kingdom. And they wanted to worship him as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Queen of Sheba paid homage to Solomon, but lo, a greater than Solomon is here !

They had rich presents with them. It is a custom still in those countries for the visitor to a king to carry costly gifts with him. But their gifts* were such as were considered as offerings to God. They then

* The word translated “gifts” is used in the New Testament only once or twice (Rev. xi. 10) to denote gifts from man to man; but is used fifteen or sixteen times to denote the gifts or offerings made to God. This would go to show that the Magi worshipped Jesus as a king far greater than men.

opened the chests or caskets which they had brought, and presented unto him gifts. These gifts were given not to Mary, but to the Holy Child. They gave costly offerings.

They gave gold. It was by many nations, then, regarded as sacred. There was much gold about the Temple. The Psalmist said, "To him shall be given of the gold of Arabia." Some think this gold was used when Joseph and Mary fled with the young child into Egypt. Of course we cannot know.

They gave frankincense. This was made from a plant or tree. It is supposed to have come from India. It was often used in the temple, as an offering to the Lord. It was the most costly and most highly prized

of all the ancient perfumes ; more precious than the box of “ ointment very costly ” which one of the Marys poured upon Jesus’ head.

They gave myrrh. It was used in anointing priests and kings, and also used in embalming the dead. The body of Jesus was anointed partly with myrrh after he was taken down from the cross. We can see how appropriate this offering was, in anointing him as the Great King, and also for his burial. We do not say, however, that these wise men so intended it.

Great was the faith of these Magi. They will rise up in judgment and condemn many who had far greater light and knowledge of Jesus. They believed in Christ before they saw

him ; and when they saw him, an infant in poverty, they still believed. They saw no miracles done by him. They saw no halo of brightness about his head. They saw nothing but a tender infant, helpless, and in need of a mother's gentle care. And yet when they saw him they believed that they saw the Divine Saviour of the world.* “They fell down and worshipped him.”

“What trouble it cost them to travel from their homes to the house where Jesus was born !” Some think they came 1500 miles to see Jesus. “The dangers were neither few, nor small. But none of these things moved them. They had their hearts set on seeing him, and they

* Ryle on Matthew.

never rested till they saw him. They prove to us the truth of the old saying, ‘Where there is a will, there is a way.*’”

And now they must return home. They perhaps had seen enough of Herod, to distrust him. He seemed too much like a wolf in sheep’s clothing. God assures them, in a dream, that Herod has some evil design in view. They are well warned not to return to him. So they depart for their own country another way. Thus some Gentiles came to see Jesus while in his cradle. Other Gentiles came to see him just before he went to the cross. They said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

The shepherds were the first fruits

* Ryle on Matthew.

of the Jewish nation ; the wise men the first fruits of the Gentile world. How beautiful here are the words of Isaiah, “ The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising ! ” also those of the Psalmist, “ The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents : the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him.”

This miraculous star went out long ago ; the gospel now shines in its stead. If we are as diligent as these sages, we shall find that Jesus is our King, and King of all. But we have no other star than the truth, no Saviour but Jesus. No other ! aye, do we need any other ?

“While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?”

Just here I find some words so beautiful and full of meaning, that they ought to be added to this chapter.

“The star, as well as the other phenomena attending the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, had this peculiar and distinct meaning, viz: that heaven and earth were brought together in the birth of our Redeemer. The babe lay in the cradle —the star moved in the firmament. The star in the visible heaven (always typical of the spiritual) pointed to the birth place of the child on earth. The same thing is true of this shepherd story in the text. So simple is it, so exquisite,

so rich in the elements of spiritual significance as well as of poetry, that it has taken a hold upon the mind and imagination of the race stronger, perhaps, than that of any other gospel narrative. It is one of the most beautiful tales that you can tell to your children. Even in the earliest childhood it will make their little ears open and their eyes dilate with wonder. The angelic visit, like the quiet movement of the star, indicates that in the birth of the child at Bethlehem, heaven and earth are brought together. ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ This was not the song of the by-standers in the stable at Bethlehem. No, the cradle was in

the manger, and the manger was on the earth, and the child was born here, but this angelic song was sung by the choirs in the upper world. The shepherds were upon the earth, and the shining throng, that appeared at the utterance of the angel, and joined in this glorious song,—these came from afar, singing as they descended from the distant heaven, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ Heaven and earth rejoiced together over the birth of the babe of Bethlehem.”—

Dr. M‘Clintock.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BABES OF BETHLEHEM.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word : for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt : and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of

the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. Matt. ii. 13-18.

And lo ! alas, behold ! what slaughter he doth make,
Shedding the blood of infants, all, sweet Saviour,
for thy sake.
A King is born, they say, which King this king
would kill ;
Oh woe, and woful heavy day when wretches
have their will.

Old Christmas Carol.

HEROD had promised to go and worship the Holy Child as soon as he heard where he was. But the wise men did not return to tell him. They obeyed God rather than man. If Herod had really desired to

worship Jesus, he could easily have found him.

He was so anxious to take the young child's life that he probably did not wait long in suspense. He inquired for the Magi, and learned that they had gone home another way. His plan of treachery had failed. He was very angry. He could not rule his own spirit. Anger is always dangerous. It betrays one into great sin. Alexander the Great, at a feast, fell into such a rage that he struck his dearest bosom friend dead at his feet. Herod the Great did even more wickedly.

He saw that he was mocked by the wise men, or foiled in his plan with them. He was too angry to be cool and crafty. He was des-

perate. In order to kill one child, he resolved to kill all the children in Bethlehem, which were two years old and under. It is not likely that the Holy Child was then two years old, or Herod would have resolved to kill all who were three or four years old. He wished to make sure work, and fixed the age high enough to include Jesus. He counted from the time that he saw the wise men. So jealous a tyrant would not wait long.

Herod was used to desperate murders, but he was about to commit one, the most inhuman that was ever done by cruel tyrants. "The king's wrath is the messenger of death." He ordered men to murder the harmless babes of

Bethlehem. None but wicked men would do so outrageous a deed. Their names do not deserve to be mentioned. They made ready to go.

Joseph had a dream, soon after the wise men had gone. In a vision he sees the angel of the Lord, and hears him say, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word ; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”

He arises that moment. He does not wait till day-break. The murderers will soon be in the town. If he should wait till day, some one might see him fleeing away and put the cruel men upon the track. So he takes the young child and his

mother and goes by night. It was night when Jesus escaped Herod ; it was night when he was betrayed by Judas.

The little family flee to Egypt. It was a weary journey of three or four days. Rich people would have found it tiresome, but how much more so to the pale mother, and to Joseph, who perhaps carried the young child in his arms !

Egypt was a heathen land. The most beautiful stories in all its history are those of Joseph, once the wearer of the “coat of many colours,” and afterward the chief man at the royal court ; and the story of Moses, once saved from death such as Herod caused, by being hidden in the little ark among

the reeds of the Nile, and afterward the leader of the Hebrews. It was night when the Hebrews left Egypt for Judea ; it was night when Jesus left Judea for Egypt.

Herod could have no power in Egypt. There were some Jews living in this land at this time. Perhaps Joseph and Mary were with some of them. Not a word is told us about any attentions they received while there. The story about an idol falling before Jesus there, is not founded on good authority. It is not in the Bible.

The murderer come to Bethlehem. They seize the young children and put them to death. They are in such haste that mothers cannot hide their little ones. Their tears and

shrieks are not regarded. The mother, who has gone down the hill-side for a pitcher of water, comes back and finds her babe dead in its blood. The little brother who plays by the gate is soon gasping in his wounds. One is snatched from its cradle, and another pulled away from a mother's arms. Who can imagine the horrors of such an hour? All the children in the town and in the country near to it are slain. Perhaps some of those shepherds wept over their murdered babes.

How many were killed, we know not. Bethlehem then had about 2000 inhabitants, and perhaps there were forty or fifty infants slain. What a band of little martyrs to Jesus Christ!

"Sweet firstlings of that slaughtered flock,
So precious to the Lord."

This deed of terror filled Bethlehem with mourners. Parents, who then loved their children as much as parents do now, were almost frantic with grief. One, we may suppose, wept over a first-born, another over the youngest babe. Children too were in tears. This mourning is spoken of in strong terms, as if Rachel had risen from her grave between Bethel and Bethlehem, and come down to weep and lament over these children. She will not be comforted "because they are not"—are not alive. She is represented as having done this once before, when Jeremiah and many Jews were taken captive,

and a great slaughter was committed in Judea.

Soon after this wholesale slaughter Herod died. He died in a splendid palace at Jericho, of the most loathsome diseases. He showed no repentance. Nor was this deadly king yet satisfied with taking life. He tried to kill himself. One day he called for an apple and a knife. When he got the knife, he looked about and had a mind to stab himself with it, but a cousin of his saw him, caught his hand, and cried loudly for help. The palace was filled with alarm. Some thought the king was dead. Antipater, a son of Herod, was in chains by the order of his father. This son, thinking his father was dead, talked to

the jailer about letting him go. This was told to Herod, and he in his rage ordered Antipater to be slain.

This terrible king knew that the Jews would be glad of his death. And on his death bed he said, "What chiefly troubles me is this, that I shall die without being lamented, and without such mourning as men usually expect at a king's death." In order to turn this joy into weeping he hit upon this monstrous plan. He called together the nobles of the land, and had them imprisoned in the circus. He ordered his sister to have them all slain the moment he was dead, so that the people would have something to weep for, if not for him. This brutal order was not executed. Can you wonder

at his killing the babes of Bethlehem? It is not strange that Josephus does not tell of the murder of the infants, for that was among Herod's smaller crimes! It was but a drop in his ocean of blood!

He could take the lives of others, but could not protract his own. His death was wretched; but his son Archelaus took pains to make his funeral splendid. The body was carried on a golden bier, with precious stones and gems set in it. On the dead king's head was a diadem, and above it a crown of gold, and a sceptre was in his right hand. The whole army followed in battle array, and five hundred court officers, with sweet spices to embalm the body. How different all this

parade over a wicked man, from the humble way in which Joseph took flight with the Holy Child !

The death of the babes of Bethlehem brings to mind a letter and a song, which are too beautiful to be lost, and are found in the next chapter. Those infants had a Saviour. We believe that the Holy Ghost made them holy, and that they received a martyr's crown. Simeon was like a shock of corn fully ripe for the harvest: these babes were as “gathered lilies.”

CHAPTER XII.

CHILDREN IN HEAVEN.

From many a home has gone to heaven
A little smiling child,
A little brother whom we loved,
A little sister mild ;
We love them, and they love us, there
Each is a bright and shining star.

I. A TALK WITH DEATH.

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS,—Is there chillness and gloom in that one short word? I would not make you sad. It would grieve me to see any little boy or girl pained by a word or look of mine.

“Then,” some little one may ask, “why do you choose a subject so gloomy?” I cannot tell, my dear, unless it is because Death is so determined to be no stranger among us. He comes without our bidding, and in spite of all our care takes whom he will. Yesterday, I saw a house where he had entered, and taken the mother from her little children ; but a few steps farther, I saw a little babe just passing away. The mother wept, and laid the little head upon her breast; but I knew that Death would not mind her grief. I knew that the dear baby must die. Still, I had not thought of writing to you about it; but just as I had taken my pen, a lady came in looking very sorrowful, and after a time

she told me that she feared Death was coming for her daughter, her *only* daughter. She, too, wept; but I knew that Death would not mind her tears. When the lady was gone, *Death* seemed very present with me, and he seemed to say, "Write to the children about me; and tell them that I am not what they think me to be."

You know, children, that a good poet has said,

"Stoop down, my thoughts, that used to rise,
Converse awhile with Death."

So I conversed with Death, and the more I talked with him, the better he appeared. I asked him what he had done with the beautiful flowers which he had stolen from our earthly

gardens ? for you know that he has come just like the hoarfrost, and blighted the rose-buds as they were beginning to bloom. He had done that thing to me, and I felt that I had a right to ask. But Death replied very calmly, “ You should not say *stolen* ; for I am not a thief. There is one who *owns* all the flowers upon your broad green earth ; and he has a right to transplant them when and where he pleases. He sends me to your garden. I do not come to kill, to steal, and to destroy ; but only to do my Maker’s bidding.”

“ But why,” I asked, “ do you snatch them so rudely, and leave hearts all torn and bleeding ? ”

“ Alas ! ” replied Death, “ why will

not mortals let them go ? Good little children are the Paradise flowers, —‘ Of such is the kingdom of heaven ;’ but be the world ever so bleak and desolate, mortals would keep them here ; so they bind them with cords lest they be taken away ; and these cords are twined with their own heart-strings ; how can I loosen the one, without breaking the other ?”

I was nearly silenced by this reply. There was one more question which I longed to ask, but I dared not speak it aloud. It was this : “Since the world is so bleak, why take away the little of love and beauty which mortals have ?”

Death smiled upon me then, and answered, “God is preparing some-
16 *

thing better than a *bleak* world, for those who love him well enough to believe that ‘He doeth all things well.’ In the heavenly mansions they will find more than they have lost. Is it not best, then, to acquiesce in his will, and reverently receive his messenger?’”

I answered, “Yes;” and Death never seemed to me so amiable before. I believe that all he says is true, and that we should not regard him as a cruel enemy. What do the children think?

Family Treasury.

II. THE REAPER AND THE FLOWERS.

There is a Reaper whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

“ Shall I have nought that is fair,” saith he,
“ Have nought but the bearded grain ?
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to
me,
I will give them all back again.”

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
He kissed their drooping leaves,
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He bound them in his sheaves.

“ My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,”
The Reaper said and smiled ;
“ Dear tokens of the earth are they
Where he was once a child.

“ They shall all bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by my care,
And saints upon their garments white
These sacred blossoms wear.”

And the mother gave, in tears and pain,
The flowers she most did love ;
She knew she should find them all again
In the fields of light above.

Oh not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day ;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth
And took the flowers away.

LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SON OF GOD CALLED OUT OF EGYPT.

But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel : for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither : notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.—Matt. ii. 19—23.

The Lord calls back the sparrows,
When storm and cold are fled ;
He thus called home the Holy Child,
When the deathly king was dead.

AFTER Herod's death, Archelaus his son was proclaimed King of the Jews. The soldiers promised him the same good-will and readiness to obey, that they had shown to his father. He went to the temple and had praises sung in his honour. The people hoped he would be a better king than Herod, and were glad to receive him. Each one vied with another to see who could sing the loudest in his praise. They made for him a throne of gold, and he told them he was glad they did not remember the evil his father had done, and he promised to be a better

man. He said that he did not wish to be called king, for that honour should be given to Cesar Augustus. Then it was that the sceptre had departed from Judah. He offered sacrifice to God, and then went to feast his friends.

Was he resigning his sceptre to the child who was born King of the Jews? Did he intend to call him from Egypt to the throne? By no means. Nor did Jesus wish this honour.

Archelaus would be jealous of the Holy Child. He, too, would take his revenge on any one who he thought was to be a king of the Jews. He, too, put many people to death, and perhaps had some plan to destroy the young child. Arche-

laus reigned nine years, but did nothing to his credit. He did not keep his fair promises, and was cruel to the Jews. Complaint was made to Augustus, and he went to Rome, but could not defend his conduct.

The Emperor banished him to Vienne, and claimed Judea as a Roman Province. He then sent Cyrenius, (mentioned in Luke ii. 1,) to collect the taxes which had been registered when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This was eight or ten years after Jesus was brought from Egypt.

The same angel who appeared to Joseph in Bethlehem, came to him in Egypt. He had said, "Be thou there until I bring thee word."

He now speaks very much in the same words as before. "Arise and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young child's life." Not *he* alone is dead, but *they*. Does it mean that the men who had killed the babes of Bethlehem, were slain? Perhaps Herod had learned that these men had failed to destroy the young child, and in his rage had put them to death.

Joseph obeyed, for he was ready to believe the word just because God sent it to him. The little family came into the land of Judea. It would seem that he intended to go to Bethlehem or Jerusalem to reside. It may be that he then

thought the Holy Child should have a home in one of those cities, where so many patriarchs, prophets, and kings had lived. But Jesus was to live in a humble place.

Joseph heard that “Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod.” Would he not expect this? He may have thought that all the family of Herod had been dethroned; or he may have known that Herod had promised the kingdom to Herod Antipas.* He did thus promise, but afterward changed his will. Joseph was not expecting such news. Archelaus was to be feared. Joseph knew he

* He reigned after Archelaus and put John the Baptist to death. Our Saviour called him “that fox.”

was too much like his father to be trusted, and was afraid to go into his kingdom.

While thus in fear, he was warned of God not to expose the young child to this son of Herod. He turned aside from the road toward Jerusalem, and went into Galilee. The family passed through Samaria. Galilee was, then, under the reign of Herod Antipas, a weak man and milder prince. We are here taught that we should use all proper means to preserve our lives. Jesus was, like us, exposed to dangers.

Thus God called his son out of Egypt. This was foretold in the days of Hosea. The prophecy at first referred to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. It also referred to

Christ. Many lights may be set in a row, and when you are in range with them, they appear as one great light. So several prophecies which referred to other persons, are fulfilled in Christ. They are one great light in him.

Had it not been for this prophecy, the enemies of Jesus might have said, that he was not the Messiah, for he came out of Egypt, a foreign country. They could not say so in face of these words, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.”*

Joseph came to Nazareth. It had been Mary’s home. It was not an honourable city like Bethlehem. The name was a by-word, because many of the people were heathen.

* Hosea xi. 1.

So greatly was it in disrepute that a proverb arose, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Jesus Christ was willing to dwell in the meanest city in Galilee. "He humbled himself." He was willing to bear the name of reproach, "a Nazarene," "Jesus of Nazareth!" Good men are yet reproached because they come from a poor and despised place. Not place, but character makes a man. He went there to fulfil prophecy. No one prophet had foretold this, but this was the meaning of many prophets. Matthew says it was spoken by the prophets,—not by one prophet—"He shall be called a Nazarene." Many drops make the rain, and so

many utterances made this prediction.

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.” This is all that is said of him until he was twelve years old.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JOYFUL VISIT TO THE PASSOVER.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey ; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him,

they were amazed : and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them : but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased, in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Luke ii. 41—52.

I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord.

King David.

IT was a happy day for a Hebrew child, when he became twelve years old. He might then go to that great city of which he had heard so much, and had read in the word of God. He might go and see the Temple and the sacrifices, the priests and the Levites. Boys at

this age were called “sons of the law,” and were sometimes taken to Jerusalem to be educated, just as Saul of Tarsus was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Perhaps about this very time Saul had been sent to study with the “doctors of the law.”

It was a happy day for a Hebrew child, when the Passover season came round. For months before, his parents may have said that if he honoured them properly, he should go to the great city, and see the holy Temple, and attend the feast. He would long for the day to come.

The Passover was held in the spring, during the latter part of March. Great preparations were

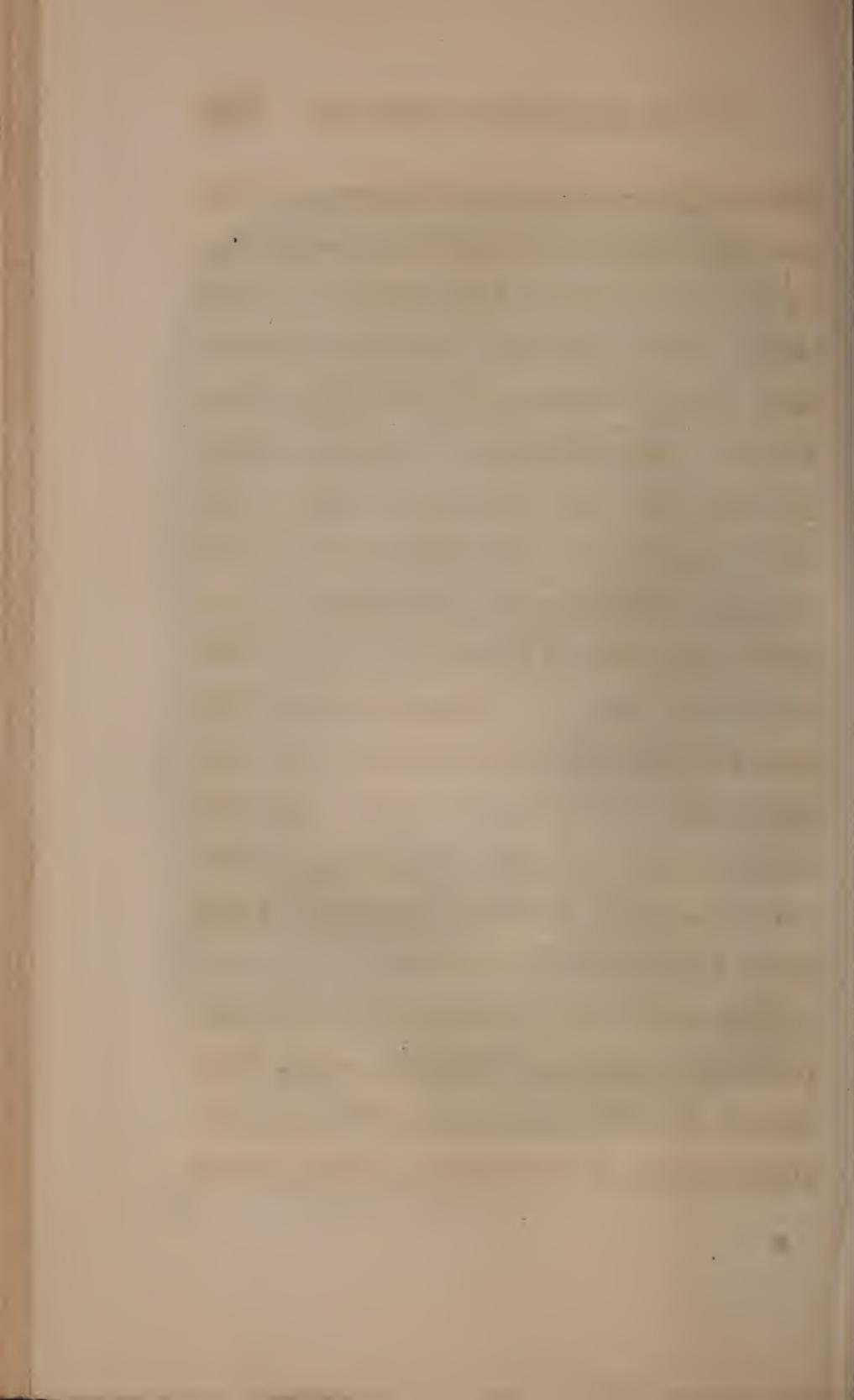
made in Jerusalem. The temple was put in the best repair. The streets were cleaned. The roads to the city were put in good order. In the graveyards about the city, men were busy in whitening the tombstones, and marking the graves of the humble and the poor. For if any one should tread upon a grave he would not be allowed, for several days, to go into the temple.

On a certain evening, some horsemen, on the swiftest Arab coursers, rode out of Jerusalem. Some went toward Beersheba, others toward Carmel and Tabor, and along the Jordan. They bore the tidings, that "all things were now ready for the Passover."

At the same hour some footmen went over the brook Kedron, and



Fire signals to announce the time of the Passover. p. 203.



climbed the Mount of Olives. They carried fagots of light dry wood on their shoulders. One took a lantern. They heaped up the fagots and added brushwood to the pile. When the darkness came, they set fire to the pile, and the vast blaze could be seen afar off. This was a signal to announce the time of the Passover. All the city could see it. Soon another fire was kindled on the distant hill, or mountain, then another farther away, until these blazing signals could be seen through all the land from Olivet to Lebanon.

The next day, companies of people were passing Jericho and Emmaus, Jacob's well and Hebron, on the way to Jerusalem. They came

in companies so as to be safe from attacks of robbers. They sing and shout on the march.

Such a Passover came when Jesus was twelve years of age. His parents were very strict in keeping it. Every year they went to the City of the Great King to observe it. This time they take Jesus with them. We may well imagine that he went up with joy and gladness. As he came near the city he saw the temple shining in its gold, like a mountain of snow in the sunlight. That city was named and preserved for him. That temple was built to prepare for his coming. The priests were but types of himself as "our great High Priest." The songs sung in the temple were

but praises to himself. He was the Lord whom the people praised. He was the Messiah whom they expected. The Passover-lamb was only a type of the “Lamb of God.”

We may imagine that he saw the usual services of worship in the temple while there. He saw the lambs led to the altar and slain, and the blood sprinkled on the altar. He saw some parts burned, and other parts carried away for the Passover-supper.

Each family, or group of friends, carried their lamb to a lodging-place, and there it was prepared for the solemn feast. It was roasted before a large fire on a piece of wood, in the form of a cross. A table was

set, and couches placed about it, on which to recline while eating.

When the company gathered about the table, they took a little wine mingled with water. A blessing was asked upon the supper. Bitter herbs were eaten, to remind them of the bondage in Egypt.

If there were any young persons present, ready to ask, "What mean ye by this service?" Exod. xii. 26, 27, it was all explained. Often an address was made like the following:

"Children, we were all servants like this maid-servant or man-servant, who waiteth on us, and on this night many years ago, the Lord redeemed us, and brought us to liberty. How different is this night from all other nights! For

on all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread indifferently, but on this night unleavened bread only. On ordinary nights we eat any other herbs, on this night bitter herbs. On other nights we eat flesh, either roasted, stewed, or boiled, but on this night we eat roasted flesh only. On other nights we wash but once, on this night twice. On other nights we eat either sitting or leaning, on this night we eat leaning.”*

The supper was then eaten. How strange to think of Jesus eating the Paschal lamb which was a type of

* In the time of our Saviour the Jews did not keep the Passover quite in the same manner that their fathers had done. We refer to the time when he lived.

himself! The blood of that lamb had once been sprinkled on the door-posts, so that the angel might *pass over* the houses of the Hebrews and spare the first-born. The blood of Jesus would be sprinkled on the cross, so that we might be saved by his death.

Joseph and Mary were eight days in the great city. They fulfilled all that was required of them, as faithfully as they had done several years before. Simeon and Anna were now dead. Mary is not said to have received any attentions. She was not treated as an object of worship. They returned toward home in the company of friends and relatives. They thought, of course, that Jesus was with some of their friends, and as

he was twelve years old, they did not feel anxious about him. When they had gone a day's journey, and the night came, they sought him, but he could not be found in the company.

Mr. Thomson, who has seen such companies on their way, and heard parents calling for their children, and friends hallooing for friends, says,

“ It is not in fact surprising that, in the midst of such a crowd, Joseph and his mother should suppose that Jesus was in the ‘company with his kinsfolk and acquaintance,’ nor is the time that elapsed, before they became so alarmed at his absence as to turn back and search for him, at all remarkable. I question

whether there is ever a pilgrimage made from Jerusalem to the Jordan, at this day, without the separation of parents and children equally prolonged ; and in this case, it was the absence of a youth, who, his parents well knew, had never done in his whole life, one unwise or improper act. They would not, therefore, be easily alarmed on his account."—*The Land and the Book*, ii. 452.

As soon as they could, they turned back to seek him, and perhaps they made inquiries along the way. They went sorrowing.

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS WITH THE DOCTORS.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Luke ii. 46—52.

“The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
That feels not at that sight.”

THE chief book among the Jews was the Old Testament. Those who were the most learned in it, and who taught it, were called Doctors. What they prized most highly was an ability to interpret the law of God. The people counted such a man wise.

These Doctors often sat in a part of the temple. In their discussions, some one would propose a verse in the Scriptures, and all would tell what they thought it meant. They often examined the youth in their studies, for in every faithful family the children were taught the word of God. Peter and John, though not learned in the studies of the Greeks

and Persians, were well versed in the Scriptures.

These Doctors often sat upon circular benches, a little raised from the floor, and their students sat at their feet on mats, or on the floor. Thus Jesus sat in “the midst of the Doctors.” It is not likely that he was *disputing* with them : but he sat “both hearing and asking them questions.”

This is the true way to learn. Jesus heard them ask one another about important things. No doubt they talked about the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, or the “weightier matters of the law,” or the “traditions of the elders,” or about fasts, and alms, and feasts. No doubt they had many wrong

notions, such as a child, who knew his Bible, would know were not in the Scriptures. But Jesus heard them respectfully. He was learning their errors, so that he might correct them when he should rise up as the great Teacher. "Be swift to hear, slow to speak."

As he was willing to hear them, they were willing to hear him. He asked them very deep questions, but we know not what. They were astonished at his learning. His answers were very wise. No doubt, he often argued from the word of God. It would seem that many persons gathered about him to hear. All that heard him were astonished. He was the Wonderful, the Counselor. Never spake child as this child.

He talked like a child one hundred years old. He felt that he was in his Father's house, engaged in his Father's work. What great truths must have fallen from his lips !

Perhaps it may teach a good lesson to relate, here, a beautiful legend. It is not found in the Bible, but contains a great truth. We may call it a parable.

Seven learned Doctors were one feast-day, sitting in the Temple talking about REST. One said it was found in honest riches ; another said that fame and praise would bring it. Another said that rest was found in power to rule the state. Another spoke of a home. Another thought it was found by keeping the ceremonial law of Moses.

Then the tallest and most venerable Rabbi said, “ Ye have spoken wisely ; but one thing more is necessary. He only can find rest, who to all things addeth this ; that he keepeth the tradition of the Elders.”

There sat in the court a fair-haired boy, playing with some lilies, and, hearing the talk, he dropped them with astonishment from his hands, and looked up—that boy of twelve—and said ; “ Nay, nay, fathers ; he only findeth rest, who loveth his brother as himself, and loveth God with his whole heart and soul. He is greater than fame and wealth and power ; he is happier than a happy home, happy without it ; he is better than honoured age ; he is a law to himself and above all

tradition." The doctors were astonished. They said, "When Christ cometh, shall he tell us greater things than these?" And they thanked God, saying, "The old men are not always wise, yet God be praised, that out of the mouth of this young child, has his praise become perfect."

On the third day after Joseph and Mary had missed Jesus, they came to the temple. They were amazed to see him sitting with the learned men, and attracting so much attention. They may have listened awhile to his wondrous words. Mary spoke just as most mothers would speak at such a time, to a child they loved, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?

Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." She did not understand him, and perhaps was partly wrong in her rebuke. Mary was not sinless.

But mark the answer. Jesus does not say, "Why did you not attend to me when you were starting home? Why so careless? Why so late in seeking me?" No guile was found in his mouth. But he is amazed at their amazement, and asks, "How is it that ye sought me?" Were you alarmed? Why seek me in fear? Will not my Father, my real Father, take care of me? Why seek in any place but this? "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Is not my place in my Father's house?" This

shows that he knew for what he had come into the world. He was to teach and save sinners. He seems to intimate that he is not dependent on them. Yet he submits to them. Though he knows more than they do, yet he does not cast them off.

They understood not his words. We can see their meaning better than they, because we have his teaching and life written to instruct us. But Mary kept all these sayings in her heart. If we remember deep sayings, their meaning will become clearer after a while. If one tries to learn only what he can understand at the moment, he will never be wise.

Here is the first written word from the lips of Jesus. What he said

before this, how he asked his mother questions, and said strange things ; and what he uttered daily for eighteen years after this, we cannot know. It is the only saying of his childhood reported to us. How full of meaning ! He talks about his Father's work. He intimates that he is not Mary's son, but is the Son of God. Is every child of twelve years doing a Father's will ? Do we know what the word " Our Father " means ?

It is said, in a parable, that three persons once met—a pagan, a Jew and a Christian. The pagan called the sun his God. The Jew was astonished.

" What do you call the supreme Being ?" asked the pagan.

"We call him Jehovah Adonai, the Lord who is, who was, and who will be," replied the Jew.

"Your appellation is grand and sublime," said the first, "but it is awful too."

A Christian then drew near and said—

"We call him FATHER."

The pagan and the Jew looked at each other and said,

"Here is at once an image and a reality; it is a word from the heart."

Then they all raised their eyes to heaven, and said, with reverence and love, "OUR FATHER," and they took each other by the hand and all three called one another "*brothers*."

Jesus then went down with Joseph

and Mary to Nazareth. As Joseph is not mentioned after this, it is thought that he died before Jesus was thirty years old.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LESSON FROM NAZARETH.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him.

And he went down with them unto Nazareth, and was subject unto them : but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Luke ii. 40. 51, 52.

“ Honour thy father and thy mother.”

“ Children, obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right.”

WHEN John the Baptist was an infant, it was asked among the

people, “What manner of child shall this be?” Many parents have asked this question. Our parents have wondered what we should be, in this world and the next.

A mother once let her son do as he pleased, though she often told him what was right. He knew how to obey his parents, but yet cared little for their commands. Almost every day she heard of some wicked word or deed, of which he was guilty. He loved bad books, and bad boys. Often she would wring her hands and cry out, “Oh! what will become of my child?” Most people could easily see what would become of him. They knew, that if he grew and waxed strong in his evil spirit, he would be a very

wicked man, and so he was. He never honoured his father and his mother.

Let us go to Nazareth and learn a lesson. It will teach every one how to keep the fifth commandment. It is the best lesson that Nazareth ever gave us. That city gave us one very bad lesson, when the people despised Jesus. He went into the synagogue one Sabbath day, and read them a prophecy about himself, and preached to them. But they were angry, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill to cast him down.* This lesson is not one taught us by the people, but by the Holy Child. We shall put two

* Luke iv. 16-30.

verses side by side, that you may keep these sayings in your heart.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." Luke ii. 40.

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them..... And Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man." Luke ii. 51, 52.

I. *Jesus grew—he increased in stature.* He once felt as a child often feels. He can sympathize with children. He is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. He knows all their sorrows. When a man forgets how he felt and thought when a child, he cannot please children. He cannot make them happy. But Jesus never forgets this. He seems to say to us, "I was once a child; I love children." He is the Saviour to whom they should pray. He never grew too old to honour his parents, nor

to pray, nor to learn, nor to obey God.

II. *Jesus increased in wisdom—he was filled with wisdom.* As the Son of God, he knew all things. “He knew what was in man.” He knew the Father, but as the Son of Man, he had much to learn. He did not seek that knowledge which is useless, but what is wise and good. He, no doubt, read the Scriptures, and committed them to memory, and sung the Psalms. No man ever quoted Scripture more readily than he. His sayings were so wise, when he began to teach men, that even the Nazarenes “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” God’s word will make us wise.

III. *He waxed strong in spirit.* Although he had the mind of God, he had also a mind and soul, like that of man, only sinless. His human soul, or spirit, grew stronger. Thus ours may, if we acquire a sound judgment, a resolute will, a courageous heart, and strong moral purpose. Judge between good and evil. Be determined to obey God. Be afraid of nothing but sin. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Be filled with the Holy Ghost. Are we strong only in sin, and weak only in what is right?

IV. *He was subject unto his parents.* He obeyed them ; he sought to please them. For thirty years he lived at home. He loved his

mother to the last. Many think that he helped Joseph the carpenter. Jesus was not ashamed that his reputed father—only a step-father—was a carpenter ! Nor did he think this would disqualify him for his work among men. The last royal descendant of Alexander the Great was apprenticed to a carpenter, so that he might never become a king. Jesus loved, honoured, and obeyed his parents, however humble, and poor, and despised. Obedience is first learned at home, and completed in heaven.

V. He increased in favour with men. Those who knew him loved him. The more they learned, the more they loved. This is not always true of persons like us. We

love some persons until we know them better, and then we see more and more evil in them. Jesus had enemies, but those who hated him knew him not. He will grow in favour with us, if we study his character, his deeds, his death, and his dying love. We should seek the good opinion of men, but seek first to deserve it. Let us care what people think of us, and care to be good enough to be thought well of. Grapes do not grow on thorns.

VI. He increased in favour with God.
As the Son of God, the Father could not love him more than he had done from eternity. But as the Son of Man, he had more and more evidence to be sure that he pleased the Father. God blessed all that he said and did.

Does God think more of us, as “dear children,” than when we were in our cradles? Does he condemn us? Does he hate our sins? Are we growing in his favour? If we are not in favour with God, we can never be saved. “The grace of God was upon him.” God gave strength to his body and his human mind. He has done this with us, or we should never have grown an inch, nor been able to learn our alphabet. Are we thankful?

These things are said of the humanity of Jesus. Far more wonderful things are said of his Divinity. He said that he was the Son of God. Everybody that wrote of him in the Bible said that he was Divine. All who love to believe the Bible will

say that he is Christ Jesus the Lord from heaven. He did not begin his existence on the earth. John says so in the first verse of his Gospel. Paul says so in the second chapter of Philippians. All say that the man Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. Jesus said that he came down from heaven. He was there before there was ever any world. He spoke of the "glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

He came to the earth. He humbled himself. He took the form of a servant. And this is the reason why he had to learn, to study, to grow. This is all the reason we can give. If you ask for others, we must say, "We do not know!" We

often must say this, even of the grass, the trees, the stars, and heaven.

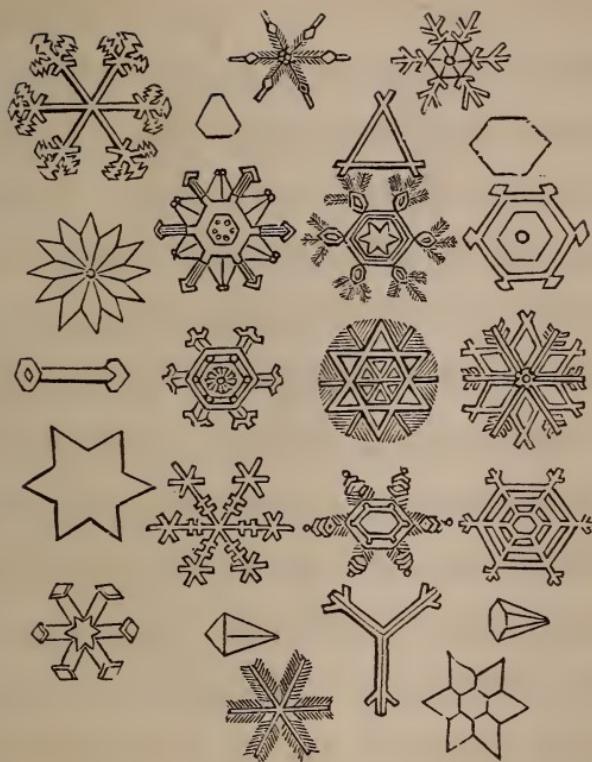
My college teacher once said : “Never be ashamed to say, ‘I don’t know,’ when you do not know. Never be ashamed to let others appear wiser than you are. Never be ashamed to ask proper questions.”

One of our class went to teach a school. The directors met to examine him and see whether he would do for the place. At first he was a little frightened, but soon thought of what his professor had said. “I’ll act on that,” he said to himself. One of the directors asked, “Where, sir, is Saghalien?”

“I do not know, sir,” said the young candidate, “but would be very glad to learn.”

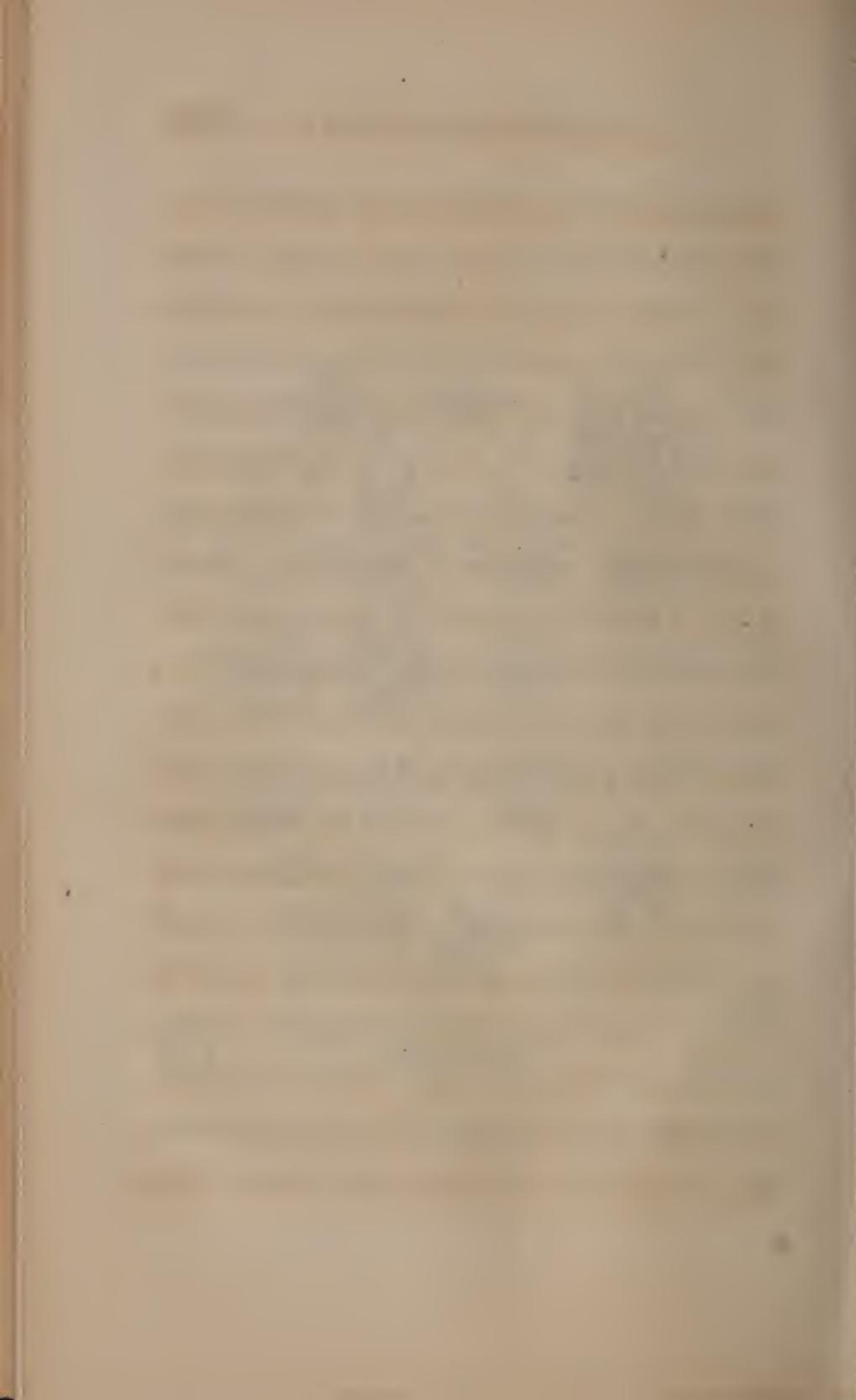
"Well, we don't know either," said they, and proceeded to put other questions, which were answered to their entire satisfaction. One of them said afterwards, "We thought as much of your first answer as any of the rest. He that can gracefully say, 'I do not know,' will be most likely to learn."

But there are some things which we never can know in this world. We can never know how Jesus was the Son of God, and yet had to learn and grow in wisdom. Yet how foolish it would be to say, "We cannot know, and therefore these things cannot be true." We cannot tell why there are about one hundred varieties of snow-crystals, nor why no two roses on the



Snow Crystals.

p. 234.



same stem are precisely alike, nor why no two leaves on a great oak are just alike in their form ; but yet these are facts.

There are people who are determined not to believe some things whether they are in the Bible or not. They will not listen to proof and strong evidence. How foolish this is ! In the place where I am writing it *seems* to me that the sun rises in the west, and sets in the east. I often look in the west to see the sun in the morning, but never see it there. I forget myself and look north to see the sun at noon, but have never been able to see him there. He won't change to suit my whims. But I know the sun rises in the east, for I have the

evidence every morning. God proves it to me every day. What *seems* to be true in my *feelings* is not true in this case. *Faith* is better than *feeling*, because faith is founded on evidence.

A gentleman once wrote as follows : Scepticism is natural to all minds, and is the vulgar weed which grows in every soil. I once made an experiment on a labourer, and watched the process of infidelity in the human mind. He was a man of good understanding, but had little information beyond his humble occupation. He was working in my plantation on a very hot summer's day.

“ A hot day, my friend.”

“ Yes, sir, I never knew such a day in all my life ; if it was decent,

I should pull off every rag about me."

"Well, never mind, we shall have it cold enough by and by, when the sun gets nearer to us."

"Sir," said the man, leaning on his spade, and looking at me with an arch smile, "I believe you know a great many things, but I can never believe that."

"What cannot you believe?"

"Why, that the sun is nearer to us in the winter than it is in the summer; don't I feel him blistering my back now? and certain sure he must be farther off, when I stand shivering in the frost and snow."

"Yet it is a certain fact, whether you will believe it or not, and, more than this, it is very probable there

is no heat at all in the sun.” This was too incredible even for examination. It appeared to his mind a perfect absurdity ; but he did not think it right to contradict his master, and so he fell to his work again.

“ I say, won’t you believe what I have told you ? I must know better than you about these matters.”

Shaking his head, he kept on working, and muttered, “ I never *can* believe this—I never *will* believe this.”

“ Well, come to me in the evening, and I’ll convince you by the testimony of your senses. You shall see if you won’t believe.”

When he came, I lit a candle, and bade him put his finger to the

side—then over the flame. Now pray, where is the heat the strongest?"

"On the top, sir."

"And where the weakest?"

"By the side, sir."

"And where was your finger nearest to the flame?"

"By the side, sir."

"Yes; in one case you could touch the flame without any inconvenience, in the other you could not bear the heat at some inches distant from it. Then don't you see, what we call heat does not depend on nearness or distance, and therefore supposing the sun to be a body of heat, it may be farther from us in summer than in winter, though we

feel hotter in the former than in the latter season of the year?"

He looked at me and then at the flame, as if he suspected I had altered the property of things.

"I see," said he, "this plain enough what you say, sir, about this candle—but, I hope no offence, I really can't believe the sun is not nearer to us now, than it will be next winter."*

There are proofs in the Bible that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He performed miracles in his own name, he knew all men and all things, he taught as one having authority, he said he was divine, he was worshipped, he told his followers

* See Causes and Cure of Scepticism," published by the Board of Publication. Price 15 cents.

that he would be in every place with every one of them, and hear their prayers, and he commands us to love and believe God by loving and believing Jesus.

There are proofs that he was a man—"the man Christ Jesus." The lesson from Nazareth tells us this. He wept as a man, he was weary, and hungry, and thirsty, and sorrowful as a man. Here, then, are the great facts. If they do not *seem* to be true, yet they are true. God gives the proof. Put them together and you have this—"God manifest in the flesh."

The lesson from Nazareth is not all of the gospel. But it is a great lesson. We have a glimpse of how Jesus increased in wisdom, grew

strong in spirit, obeyed his parents, and became more and more lovely in the sight of God and men. The example ought to rouse us up to grow wiser, better, and more obedient every day.

Henry, a youth of sixteen years, once went from home to an academy. Every day a younger boy came into the school-room and read a Latin lesson. Henry had a glimpse of him, and heard him reading his Cæsar as rapidly as every good boy will who has a good lesson. Henry heard his teacher praise his Latin student, and call him "the best boy he ever had in school." The example was a charming one. It fired Henry's spirit. "I must study Latin," said he; "I

must be a good scholar too. If he is going to be a minister, I want to be one also." Henry began in earnest. The books almost turned pale before him. He began to play less, sleep less, eat less, and study more. He followed on after his young friend. God changed the hearts of those young men. One of them is now a missionary in Africa, and Henry is pastor of a church in this country. And Henry writes this to me, "It was the glimpse which I had of that Latin student, that made me wish to be like him, and I began to study Latin the very next week. I became well acquainted with him, and never knew of his doing or saying anything wrong. When he played, he played

hard, and when he studied, he did it with all his might. There never was a black mark against him on the teacher's roll. He was loved more than any one in the school. His teacher said that he was always learning something from him. He knew when to say 'No,' and how to say 'Yes,' in the most frank and graceful manner. He was a young Timothy."

Was not Henry right in choosing to follow such an example? Ought not the glimpses of Jesus at the home in Nazareth, stimulate us to grow in wisdom, in meekness, in obedience, in the favour of God and men? Did he read the Bible? So ought we. Did he refuse to read and to learn folly and wickedness?

So ought we. I have no doubt but he thought the example of Samuel a good one to follow, and was ever ready to say, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHILD WHO WOULD BE HOLY.

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra ; and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed ; but his father was a Greek ; who (*i. e.* Timothy) was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him.—*Acts* xvi. 1—3.

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—*Paul to Timothy.*

PAUL never flattered men. He did not often praise them. He was

afraid of making them vain and self-conceited. It is a wicked pride to be ever saying by actions, “Come and see how humble, how good, how lovely I am.” Also, Paul was too intent upon giving praise to God, and writing of those great doctrines which he loved, to stop to pay any compliments. But he does praise one young man more than all others. Whom? Will you “read and you will know?”

Paul was a great traveller, and found all sorts of perils on the way. On one of his missionary journeys he came to Lystra, and there found a youth who loved the Saviour. He had heard of Jesus. He was seeking to be like Jesus. His name was Timothy. There is more said of

him than any other youth in the New Testament except Jesus Christ. He was not like the driver boy to whom we gave the first Testament he ever saw. He had the Old Testament, and had heard much that is in the New. He knew of "the Holy Child."

We almost forget sometimes that the great and good men of Bible days were once children. They were once in the cradle. They had their childish plays. They had to learn one thing at a time. Many of them once sat on a mother's knee, and heard the same Bible-stories which our mothers taught us. They no doubt asked, as children now do, for "one story more."

"From a child thou hast known

the holy Scriptures," wrote Paul to Timothy. Before he could read, he knew much of the Bible. A Hebrew mother could tell those rich stories of Joseph, of Moses, of Samuel, and of David, as few mothers can now. The Bible was Timothy's first-lesson book.

His father was a Greek. He perhaps wished Timothy to study Greek, and read of Spartan youth, and the "seven wise men." But no, Timothy loved the Bible the best. Such children now sing, "We won't give up the Bible." He had a grandmother also to teach him, and she was sure to tell him not to wait until he was old to begin to serve God. I have not a doubt that she told him that Samuel's way

was the wisest. Paul tells Timothy never to forget his mother and grandmother, from whom he had learned the Scriptures. Nor would he ever be too old for the Bible. “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.”

Timothy grew up at home, very much as Jesus did at Nazareth. He increased in stature, in wisdom, in spirit, and in favour with God and men. The Christians at Lystra spoke of him in praise. But he was not a Christian himself until he met with Paul. Before this he had learned, but now he believed. Paul calls him his “own son in the faith.” Paul loved him.

I do not believe that Jonathan loved David so much. No two

mere men in the New Testament seem to have loved one another so much as Paul and Timothy. They travelled for years together. Timothy would weep when they must part. When separated, Paul wrote to him, and called him, his "dearly beloved son." How tender was Paul's heart when he wrote: "Without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy!" Paul wrote this when in a prison at Rome. It was then growing toward winter, and Paul was chilled by the cold night air in the prison. He hoped Timothy would come and see him. "Do thy diligence to come

before winter." Paul had left his cloak and books at Troas, and he says, "The cloak, that I left at Troas, with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Those parchments were, perhaps, parts of the Bible. He thought more of the Scriptures than he did of his cloak. It seems that Timothy never was permitted to see him at Rome. Paul was put to death soon after this time.

One thing is worth a notice, Timothy could read his own praise and not be flattered and made vain by it. Not every one can do this. The Emperor Charles V. loved to read of the wars in which he had been the chief actor, but when one

of his friends wished to read to him what he had written in his praise, he said, "I will neither hear nor read what others have written of me. Others may do this after I am gone. But if you wish for information on any point, you have only to ask, and I will give it willingly."

The Holy Child Jesus set a high example before all children. Timothy shows them how to follow it. He was not, naturally, pure and sinless and good as Jesus was. He was a sinful child, and yet not one of his sins is recorded. He was often with wicked men, but he did not love their ways. He was surrounded by teachers of falsehood, and fables, but he "held fast the form of sound words." The only way that he became like Je-

sus, was by loving him, obeying him, and trusting in his sacrifice. He not only learned the lesson from Nazareth, but also the greater lesson from Calvary. The only way that he became a holy man was by giving his heart to the Holy Spirit to be made anew. "Create in me a new heart."

The snow is the whitest thing you ever saw. We forget how beautiful it is. A friend of mine once rose up on a November morning and saw the ground all white, and the dingy houses all fleecy. He was wonderfully overjoyed. He had never seen any snow before. "I never knew," said he, "what *white* is till now. Oh what will *white robes* be?" Can anything be whiter than snow?

Yes, David says, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!”

The Holy Child was as free from sin as the snow is white. And all who love Jesus will be made holy. This is what you say you wish, when you sing, “I want to be like Jesus.” A child once prayed, “Lord, I want to have thy Holy Spirit *now*. I do not wish to wait a long time. I do not wish to wait till tomorrow. I want to have thy Holy Spirit *now*.” God loves such a prayer. If we hate it, it is because we are not holy, nor are wishing to be. We need to be holy, more than all else.

Luther was very fond of children. So was Cromwell. They could have joined a great poet in saying, “I

deny myself my evening meal in my eagerness to work, but the interruptions by my children I cannot deny myself." Luther was happy when Christmas came, and took care that every one in his family should have something hanging on the boughs of the Christmas-tree. One Christmas he was away from home. He sent the following letter to his son John, written from Coburg in 1530 :

" Grace and peace in Christ, my dear little son. I see with pleasure that thou learnest well and prayest diligently. Do so, my son, and continue. When I come home I will bring thee a pretty fairing.

" I know a pretty merry garden wherein there are many children.

They have little golden coats, and they gather beautiful apples under the trees, and pears and cherries and plums; they sing and jump and are merry. They have beautiful little horses too, with gold bits, and silver saddles, and I asked the man to whom the garden belongs whose children they were. And he said, ‘They are the children that love to pray, and to learn, and are good!’ Then I said, ‘Dear man, I have a son too, whose name is Johnny Luther. May he not also come into the garden, and eat these beautiful apples and pears, and ride those fine horses?’ Then the man said, ‘If he loves to pray, and to learn, and is good, he shall come into this garden, and Lippus, and Jost too,

and when they all come together,
they shall have fifes and trumpets,
lutes and all sorts of music.' * * *

"But he has an aunt Lena, he
must bring her with him." Then
the man said, "It shall be so ; go and
write him so. Therefore, my dear
little son Johnny, learn and pray
away, and tell Lippus and Jost too,
that they must learn and pray, and
then you shall come to the garden
together. Herewith I commend
thee to Almighty God. ***

"Thy dear father,

"MARTIN LUTHER."

There is another garden, where
runs a river of life, and where trees
bear their fruit every month. The
waters are clear as crystal, and flow

from a throne of gold. None who love sin are allowed to enter it. All who are there are holy and happy. They have white robes and harps of gold. This garden is Paradise. Jesus is the keeper. He says we may come and live in it, and be happy for ever. He says that he will give us the proper robes, so that we may not be found in our rags. He says that he will take away our sins, so that we may not feel ashamed and guilty. He says that he will make us "whiter than snow." Are we ready to believe him ?

Around the throne of God in heaven,
Thousands of children stand ;
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy happy band,
Singing glory, glory.

What brought them to that world above,
That heaven so bright and fair?
Where all is peace and joy and love,
How came those children there,
Singing glory, glory?

On earth they sought their Saviour's grace,
On earth they loved his name
So now they see his blessed face
And stand before the Lamb,
Singing glory, glory.
Glory be to God on high.

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